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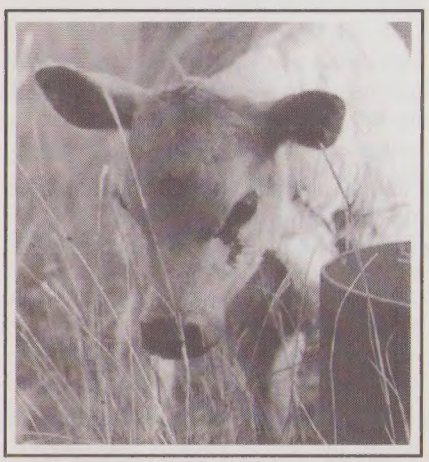

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COVER PHOTOS

Front And Back Covers: Jill Taylor finds delight and personal satisfaction in both practising and teaching others about the ancient skill of basketry. She loves using natural fibres to create objects of beauty and practicality. Read her story on page 6. Photos by Marcel Aucar.

Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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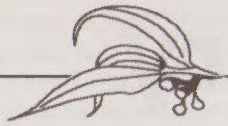

GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

After the hustle and bustle of December, and then the festive feasting and the days at home snoozing indolently, it takes iron discipline to put on tidy clothes and return to the office and the deadline dash. The first week of the year has been cool and quiet. We all returned exhausted from the Christmas heatwave, not the partying, and the unusually quiet phone suggested readers were taking the opportunity to catch up on outdoor tasks while weather conditions were mild. We're envious, I can tell you. All the plans for painting and renovating or for beautifying the garden came to nothing. It was simply too hot to move, but of course, now the holidays are over and we're back in an air-conditioned office, the temperature is perfect for enjoying a hot Christmas dinner or for physical pursuits in the house or garden. Unfortunately, there is writing, proofing and paging to be done, and quickly. Do we stand a chance for mild weather next Christmas and New Year if we put an order in now?

It may have been too hot to enjoy roast turkey and plum pudding on Christmas Day, but we timed our office celebration right and enjoyed a great luncheon. We didn't forget you all either, and proposed a toast to GR for an abundant autumn with lots of tomatoes and zucchinis, and new recipes to tempt us, projects to try and ideas to ponder upon. New ideas have touched base here already – several of the colourful Christmas cards we received were homemade and too good to just go into the recycling box. We've put them aside for an article on handmade cards for next Christmas. Of course, if you have ideas to share or a novel way of decorating cards, or know suppliers where you can get precut cards, don't wait till December to write in, we'd love to hear now. Thank you, too, for the season's greetings and New Year wishes; we felt very privileged to have such an attractive array of cards adding to the festive ambience.

While we're discussing cards, it's the perfect opportunity to remind correspondents to check that their name and address are on letters and photos. Occasionally a letter comes in with a name and nothing else, or not even a name, and, if the writer isn't a subscriber, they can be difficult to track down. It's handy, too, when sending photos to pop return details on them. We have a box of 'unowned' pics and wish we knew who sent them. Please always put your details on the back of the envelope, because should the letter be incorrectly addressed or inadvertently end up in the wrong post box, a return address reduces its chances of ending up in the dead letter office.

We like to get a response to the letters and articles we publish. Some are complimentary, stating the material was just what the reader was looking for, while others may be critical and present an alternative viewpoint. Just rarely, responses are rude. We've been taken to task a number of times for publishing Cheryl Beasley's skin and hair recipes using privet. Privet, we understand, is an environmental weed in some parts of Australia, but not in all parts. We're very happy to be informed about environmental issues, but being green doesn't confer a right to be rude. It's tricky working out what is nationally classified, and what plants are rogues and where, so perhaps comments on undesirable species, as well as threatened ones, need to have a geographic context. We can buy privet, lantana and numerous members of the thistle family at our nursery, but these same plants may be deemed noxious or undesirable in another part of the state. Keep the letters coming in, proffer advice, criticise, but do take a larger view than your own immediate area. Australia is a diverse country with many different ecosystems.

We were thrilled to open the *Age* newspaper recently and find a story about our DIY stone home builders, Catherine and Brendan, who featured in last issue, and also Margery and Keith Wiltshire from GR 157. The Wiltshires, being practicing artists, added unusual creative touches to their mudbrick home as well as their garden. Congratulations to both couples, we're sure they will have inspired many frustrated urban dwellers to start thinking about making some satisfying changes in their life. All it takes is basic skills and ingenuity, and probably less cash than many imagine, and anything can be achieved.

As a small business it's crucial we all get on together, and thankfully we do. We also share each other's trials and tribulations and happy events. We're gearing up for an incredible couple of months. Suni and Marcie are booked to exchange their vows in early April, and then, a fortnight later, Sabrina and her hubby Daniel are expecting their first baby. Understandably, all discussion is on weddings and babies now instead of gardens and renovating. Suni's dress is almost finished, a gorgeous creation, but the rest is a trifle slow. In fact, I'm sure she said they haven't a celebrant yet to do the job, though they have decided on a unique location in Melbourne for the auspicious event. Knowing Suni's ability to cope with pressure, it will all come together in the end. Sabrina likes a more regulated life and is well prepared despite serious house renovations. She's blessed with good health too. It's an exciting but busy time. We've been working ahead so things are not too chaotic in April, but there seem to be articles and magazine mock-ups everywhere. We tease the girls about suffering bride's brain or baby brain, but we're all fast succumbing to rambling recall and no one is sure anymore what they know or remember. Wish us well, especially our two lovely girls, for the happy, haphazard months till April.

Finally, if you're feeling jaded, the following note from Tammi-Lynn Allen may restore lost optimism: 'My auntie wrote to Feedback recently asking for ideas to help my eczema. Well, I have to say that she surely helped me, not only with healing my eczema, but also restoring my faith in human kindness. The number of people who responded was overwhelming and I'd like to thank everyone for caring so much. I now know I'm not alone in my struggle to control eczema. I feel that I am healing by kind thoughts as well as all the wonderful suggestions of the beautiful people who contacted us. Thank you everyone, and especially Auntie Sharyn.' The helpful spirit of readers is quite overwhelming – bless you all.

Beautiful Basketry Using Natural Fibres

by Jill Taylor, Highett, Vic.

Often affectionately referred to as 'the basket lady', Jill combines inspiration from the past with her permaculture principles and a love of nature's bounty to create lovely yet practical baskets, hats and string.

At a recent open farm day in Macclesfield I was spotted by Megg Miller from *Grass Roots*. Surrounded by unique handmade baskets and a captive audience, I was demonstrating the harvesting, storage and varying uses of plants for creating baskets from natural fibres.

My love affair with basketry began in 1990, triggered by a small advertisement in the local newspaper inviting folk to join together weekly to learn basket making. This was the beginning of the Grapevine Craft Group of Hampton.

SUPPORTIVE CRAFT GROUP

Life-long friendships were created as well as baskets each Thursday in an old shack covered by an ancient grapevine. Led expertly by Heather Leonard, we shared skills and wove a close encounter with nature. We also made valuable connections with other enthusiasts such as Basket Makers of Victoria, the Plant Craft Cottage at Melbourne's Botanic Garden and the Country Women's Association.

I wasn't the only member of the family to share the joys of basket making in the shack in Hampton. My then baby daughter, Natasha, was also surrounded with wonderful fibres, rhythmic sounds, caring touches and plenty of love. These magical ingredients have, I'm sure, played a part in making Natasha, now 11, the wonderful kid she is today.

Left: Jill loves the creative process of making a basket and being able to share her passion with others to keep this ancient craft alive.

PERMIE CONNECTION

I'm also very interested in permaculture, and so am well aware of the need for discovering alternative uses for the materials that others perceive as waste. I was fascinated to find that basketry demonstrates many of the 12 principles permaculture is founded on, including the need for diversity, using nature's gifts and seeing solutions not problems. Many of the materials for my baskets come from my sprawling garden, my travels around Victoria and NSW and from my partner Graeme's organic property. Other times I'll arrive home to find a local gardener has left a bag full of prunings for me to use.

I'm frequently commissioned to make someone a unique hat from natural fibres. I like to create my hats using flax or raffia, but I've long been aware that early Australian settlers made hats from cabbage palm leaves to protect themselves from the harsh elements they encountered in this puzzling new country. I'm yet to try cabbage palm leaves for myself, but look forward to it as a challenge for the future.

INGREDIENTS FOR A BASKET

Basketry was one of the first crafts practised by people, and it uses few tools and costs very little, if anything, to make. Like all crafts, time is a crucial ingredient. Basket makers can gather materials wherever they are and sit and create there and then – just as the indigenous Australians did.

Fibres used for basket making can be harvested throughout the year, stored in a dry area and used when needed. In fact, beautiful baskets have been made from well-stored fibres many years after their collection. A lot of fibres do need to be dampened and mellowed before being used, so it is helpful to learn the right technique through your local or state basketry group.

The list of fibres used in basketry is extensive. The foundations for a sturdy basket include wisteria, grapevine, fruit tree prunings, honeysuckle, Virginia creeper and wonga vine; these are used to create solid frames. For the 'God's eyes', which hold the frames together at each end, flax, ginger lily or stringy bark can be plied into string. For the weavers, used to complete the body of baskets, red-hot poker, iris and daffodil leaves and bullrushes are popular. She-oak needles, jacaranda stems and long pine needles make lovely stitched baskets. These materials can also be used to make coiled baskets, another form of basketry often taught by Aboriginal elders.

HOW TO BEGIN

I encourage anyone interested in taking up basketry to start small. String is a popular fibre choice for beginners and can be made from many materials including flax and red-hot poker leaves. Handmade string is often much stronger than that available commercially and is a useful resource to keep on hand to tie up tomatoes or even for wrapping Christmas and birthday presents.

Each basket is unique and beautiful.

All sorts of natural fibres can be used to make baskets, ranging from vines to barks to leaves and even needles. Each combination provides a different textual element.

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INSPIRATION FROM THE PAST

My love for creating works of art was developed and nurtured by my adoptive mother, Dorothy Wilson, who grew up on a large dairy farm in Eltham, NSW. As young girls, Dorothy and her sisters were taught many traditional skills, which Dorothy in her turn passed on lovingly to her daughters. Though Dorothy passed away 30 years ago, her passion and encouragement have continued to inspire me and my sister Fay. We are proud to follow in Dorothy's footsteps, fostering and sharing these old skills with others.

The eclectic spread of baskets and crafts throughout my home and those I display at field days such as the one at Macclesfield are testament to the enduring foundations laid by Dorothy's lessons. I wholeheartedly embrace the joys of using my hands and God's wonderful gifts to create items of beauty and practicality.

For more information on permaculture or natural basketry, write to: Jill Taylor, c/- *Grass Roots* Magazine, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661. Photos by Marcel Aucar.

Growing A Grass Roots Girl

by Heather Kozak, Dellicknora, Vic.

Before Karla was born I had plenty of preconceptions about how I was going to raise a child. Many proved to be misconceptions in the harsh light of dawn, walking the floor with an inconsolable, incomprehensible newborn who seemed to grow heavier by the minute. Some, however, have become the truths we live by, and I have ended up with a daughter who has the characteristics I wish I'd had as a child.

She is fit, strong and healthy; rarely catching the common illnesses that go around, recovering very quickly on the few occasions she has succumbed. Her confidence and bravery, combined with physical adeptness, led us to erect a low tightrope between two trees in the yard, adding a higher guide rope for my benefit more than hers. The maturity of her mental processes never ceases to amaze and entertain me. Karla is fascinated by the life cycles of the wildlife around us, and is as interested in the last part of the cycle, death, as she is in the beginnings.

Being both a writer and a bibliophile, my house abounds with literature of all sorts and Karla will often ask me to fetch the encyclopedia to provide further answers to her questions. Once she has adequately researched her subject, she loses herself in the volume, each turn of a page revealing some new wonder to ponder on.

GET PHYSICAL

While a student in a course on tutoring primary aged children recently, I learnt of kinesiology (simply put, movement 'switching on' the brain) and realised that I had been doing that all along. Numerous studies have shown that the brain and body are interlinked, particularly in our formative years, and that physical movements such as the classic cross-patterned crawl of a baby (right arm forward, left knee forward, left arm forward, right knee forward . . .) are necessary to form vital neural pathways in the brain. A weakness in these pathways may not become obvious for years, sometimes showing up as a learning difficulty or physical uncoordination.

Karla at four and a half, learning the physics of the pendulum.

One of my more accurate preconceptions had been that baby walkers and other 'strap-in' contraptions weren't a good idea, apart from the obvious safety aspects. A bright-eyed, inquisitive, formative explorer swaying passively in the grip of a mechanical swing didn't seem natural, and scientific studies have proved this theory sound. The old saw is true – you have to crawl before you can walk.

I can't claim all the credit though; Karla was the one guiding me with her physicality. She held her head up very early on and wanted to know what was going on, and was always pressing her feet into our laps and straightening her legs as if trying to stand. I used this motion as an isometric exercise and avoided the competitive spirit that drives some parents to 'train' the baby to walk early.

Early walking, often seen as a status symbol in a child's development, can instead be quite detrimental to their progress. Baby walkers can cause turning in of the feet and inappropriate muscular formation, and encourage infants to skip the essential crawling phase. Ask yourself: if the baby wasn't in that contraption, where would they be? In somebody's arms, perhaps, feeling the warmth of human flesh as opposed to homogeneous plastic?

LESSONS FROM SAND AND STRAW

Being self-sufficient means that your garden is your master, so I would settle Karla on a pile of clean straw while I got on with the work, keeping an eye on her to avoid slug consumption. The straw pile was her friend; it rustled and crunched, it facilitated rolling over and she could draw the straws through her fingers or crush them into chaff with palpable glee.

When Karla was one year old we obtained a big heap of sand and pebbles to be used eventually in a concrete floor slab. She adored sitting in the multitextured heap, digging her bare feet into the coarse river sand and retrieving water-smoothed stones with her toes. Anyone familiar with the tactile aspects of the Montessori method will know how much the sand heap taught her about physics.

IT'S A CIRCUS

When Karla was nearing two, my sister Janet was involved in a circus skills program and would entertain us with juggling, stilt walking, tightwire tomfoolery and fire breathing. Needless to say, Karla found this to be an inspiration, so Janet showed me some basic tricks of balance to try. My husband, Fred, playground builder and strong man extraordinaire, lay on his back with Karla sitting on his chest facing

him, then took her feet in his hands and encouraged her to stand up. She did, and balanced there while he straightened his arms to full length, happily looking around and unconsciously making myriad tiny adjustments to her shifting centre of balance.

We practised this with variations such as Karla clapping, waving to Mum, bobbing up and down, covering her eyes and flapping like a bird. She has never hurt herself doing her 'acwobatics' as she called them, however, we are always alert to the possibility and make sure ahead of time that there is a soft landing. She progressed to handstands, back and forward rolls, flips, tumbling, hanging by the knees from handy trees and scaling the fireman's pole attached to her swing complex. This is a double A-frame of long bush poles with an enormous cross beam, from the top of which dangles a knotted rope, the slidy pole and a tyre swing on chains. She learnt to self-power her swing and, probably without even realising it, also learnt about aerial orientation, the physics of the pendulum, kinetic power and centre of gravity at the same time.

If allowed to discover their physical limits, children will develop the capacity to sense danger and keep themselves safe instinctively. This has been illustrated with such experiments as placing a group of crawling-stage babies in a specially fitted room where half the floor was unbreakable glass covering a 60-centimetre drop. Although the babies could crawl safely over the glass floor to obtain toys, they chose not to, their innate sense of danger warning them away from the edge leading to the drop. This innate sense can be accidentally switched off by timid or overvigilant parents who spout a litany of: 'don't go up there, it's too high, you'll hurt yourself', until children become deaf to their own warning devices and reliant on an outside factor. The children then are more likely to hurt themselves, because of lack of confidence and practice.

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HEALTHY INTERESTING DIET

A healthy mind needs a healthy body to inhabit so I have paid particular attention to Karla's diet. Too many times I have seen babies' palates, innocent and waiting for first impressions, being given refined sugar products and bland franchise takeaway foods. They are too young to even ask for these toxic treats, but are already forming tastes and eating habits that will last them a lifetime. I know how difficult it is to refuse a nagging or pleading toddler a lolly, but why corrupt a child's taste buds before they reach talking stage?

I made sure that Karla's first solid foods were natural in taste and texture, offering her everything from the fruit and vegetable world first. Her curious mouth devoured baby vegetables and strawberries picked fresh from our garden, and teethed on the stems of mint and lavender. Her taste for natural food has developed to such an extent that she amazes our friends by heading straight for their herb gardens, identifying the edible plants and chowing down on sprigs of lemon balm and parsley. My mother was blaming rabbits for trimming all her herbs until she discovered Karla ensconced amongst the chives!

Her favourite meals are lamb chops with steamed vegetables and crudités with olives and yoghurt dip. I allow the occasional lolly binge as I feel that the volume of real food she eats far outweighs the odd splurge. If you become too draconian about a pure diet it can become a miserable battle, but if you have offered a wide variety of pure foods in the ever-so-important early years, you will have fewer bad eating habits to correct. A whining infant will find just as much comfort in a peach (enclosed in a clean stocking to prevent choking on big pieces) as they would in a dummy dipped in something sweet.

I had in-laws and acquaintances twittering anxiously when I fed baby Karla artichokes and prawns, but she has never shown a food allergy, lactose intolerance, asthma, eczema or other malady related to the introduction of exotic solids. Most Western nations seem to think that a baby should exist on bland or sweetened mush, very plain, monotonous and limited. If the baby is going to grow up to eat bland, sweetened burgers, it will have had a perfect training ground with that philosophy. A child can grow up enjoying our rich diversity of multicultural menus and recognising their flavours from infancy onwards.

Texture is a very important part of learning to eat well. Consider that young babies only know how to suck and learn to chew and develop their jaw muscles when they start their first solid food. Baby food manufacturers have designed a range of processed mush that will see the child through infancy to the third or fourth year, thus avoiding the need for the onerous task of chewing. The child can keep sucking drinks from specially designed containers forever, and can continue on a soft diet of bought white bread and takeaways. The child who has never had to chew hard will not want to, rejecting foods that are 'too hard' to eat merely on their texture, and may have speech and drooling problems resulting from underdeveloped facial and jaw muscles. Chewing also sets the teeth more firmly in their gum beds, promoting healthy teeth with good spacing, and primes the digestive system to receive food.

So, if you want your children to be physically adept, allow them to explore their limits, offer challenges without forcing them past their safety barriers, and give them enough silence to be able to hear the instinctive voice of their bodies. If you want them to be healthy eaters, avoid corrupting them with products that they are too young to even obtain for themselves. After all, how many one-year-olds can toddle down to the shop to buy junk food? Someone has to buy it and give it to them, so make sure that someone isn't you.

Fun With Hydroponics

by Jack Garnham, Helensvale, Qld.

No digging, no soil, no weeds, no bending over, no kneeling, no getting dirty, just lots of beautiful plants: flowers, vegetables, even trees if you are very keen. You can enjoy this easy gardening simply by setting up a hydroponics system at home.

You can use a part of your patio, a bit of your backyard or a corner of your deck. Any space of approximately two by three metres will do. There are few hard and fast rules and these are easily learnt and applied. Anyone can do it and achieve very satisfying results in a surprisingly short time.

There is no digging because there is no soil. There are no weeds because there are no undisturbed patches of soil for them to germinate and flourish in. There is no kneeling or bending over because the physical setup requires there to be a more or less waist-high growing area above ground or deck or patio, for reasons which will be clear a little later. If this is starting to sound like your style of gardening, then it is time to get down to specifics.

Hydroponics is the technique of growing plants in a food mixture called a nutrient. Because all the food requirements are in the nutrient in carefully measured amounts, soil is unnecessary. The nutrients are dissolved in water that carries the food directly to the plant roots. Naturally, the plants rather like this and growth is usually rapid and often superior.

HOW IT WORKS

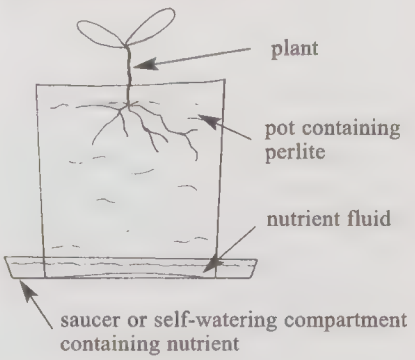
You need an open tank to hold the nutrient in sufficient quantity – somewhere from 70 to 100 litres is usually adequate. You need something to contain the plants – most often a plastic channel is used. You need a pump to deliver the nutrient to the plants. And you need a medium to support the plants physically so that they will do all this wonderful growing.

The pump pushes the nutrient mixture through a supply line to one end of the channel, from where it flows down past the roots and back into the tank. This is referred to as a nutrient-flow technique (NFT for short). The pump also needs a power source, of course, as it has to work 24 hours a day. The channel must be set up so that there is sufficient fall for the flow of nutrient back past the plants equal to more or less the rate at which the pump delivers it to the channel. Thus the tank will not empty and the channels will not run dry.

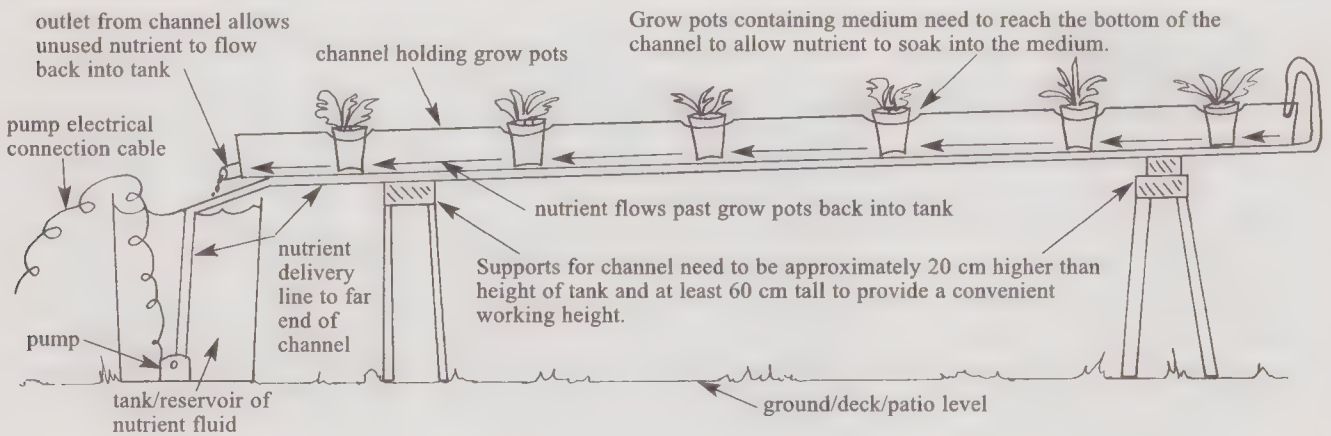
Well, that is how it used to be, and of course it still is for a lot of growers. But there is a newer and much simpler system available today. By using a special medium called perlite and self-watering tubs, pots or troughs you can do away with the channels and pumps and save money and time. Perlite is a very light substance, which sets up a consistent capillary action once it is thoroughly wet. So, by filling the self-watering pot with perlite, wetting it and then adding the nutrient to the pot in its watering section, you are ready to plant your plants. The plant will only take up the nutrient and moisture at the rate it needs it, so a daily check will normally be sufficient to maintain plant growth and health by ensuring that there is sufficient nutrient in the system, or else you can rewet the perlite with nutrient as if you were watering with a watering can.

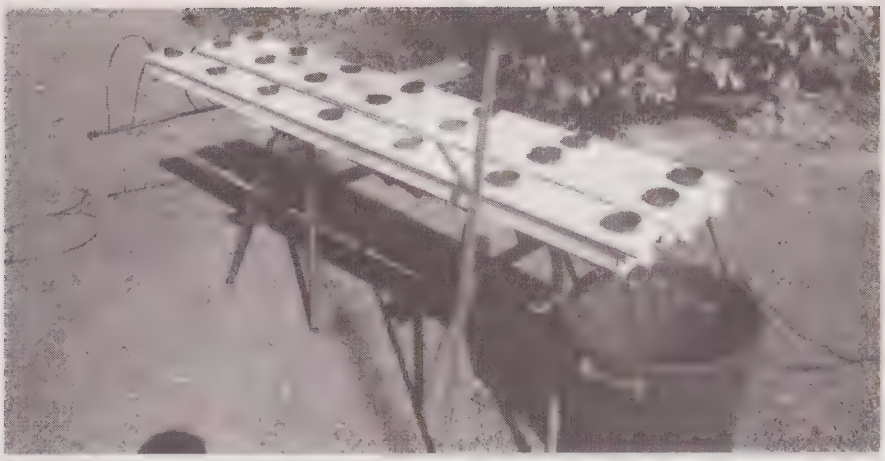
Perlite System Of Hydroponics

Note: nutrient can also be added by sprinkling through top of pot.



Typical Hydroponics System Layout


outlet from channel allows unused nutrient to flow back into tank
channel holding grow pots
Grow pots containing medium need to reach the bottom of the channel to allow nutrient to soak into the medium.
pump electrical connection cable
nutrient flows past grow pots back into tank
nutrient delivery line to far end of channel
Supports for channel need to be approximately 20 cm higher than height of tank and at least 60 cm tall to provide a convenient working height.
pump
tank/reservoir of nutrient fluid
ground/deck/patio level



System assembled ready for addition of medium in grow pots and nutrient in tank.

Typical growth even in drought times.

Perlite is a chemically inert substance. That means that it contributes nothing to the actual growing process of the plant. It works by drawing the nutrient up in its capillary action and by supporting the plant as soil does in a conventional garden.

If you are planting seedlings from a punnet or other soil-based source, it is very important to wash all the soil off the roots of the little plant otherwise the perlite could become contaminated. Care must be taken not to damage the roots as this is done.

NUTRIENT

There are many brands of nutrient available and you will eventually form your own preference. Some are liquid and some are in powder form. I favour a two-part powder type of nutrient. In this case the nutrient comes in two separate containers. These must be kept apart and mixed with water according to the instructions, only when the nutrient is needed for use. However, you may prefer one of the several liquid types.

COSTS

There is no doubt that a perlite system will be less expensive than almost any other.

Channel System

- Pump, $45.
- Tubing, $1 per metre.
- Channels, $17 per two-metre length.
- Terracotta clay balls as a medium, $35 per 50 litres.
- Plastic 60-litre bin for tank, $12.
- Nutrient, $20.
- Ongoing power use.
- Total – about $170 for a minimum system.

Perlite System

- Bag of perlite, $35.
- Four pots @ $7.50 each, $30.
- Nutrient, $20.
- Total – about $85.

ADVICE

Most hydroponic dealers are only too happy to give advice and one at least, the Hydrocentre at Nerang on the Gold Coast, runs instruction courses for beginners. Look in the *Yellow Pages*. Many have websites crammed with information. There is bound to be a dealer somewhere near your shopping centre. If not, the ones you do contact will have a mail order service. Service is important to them because few beginners feel confident to start with. If your dealer wants repeat business, he knows how important it is to give you that service to make every beginner successful.

So, hang up your spades and shovels and rakes and hoes and take up hydroponics. It's fun. It's productive. It's simple, especially using a perlite system. You will become an expert in no time. One word of warning: do not use any metal container or component in whatever system you decide on because most metals react adversely with nutrients.

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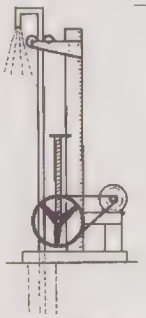

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A Work Of Art

by Gwen Leane, Port Augusta, SA.

Lyle Dudley has a passion for all things environmentally sound and had a 10-year plan for a house and a self-sufficient lifestyle in mind, though with little idea of the direction it would eventually take. He already owned a 30-hectare property situated at the base of Mount Remarkable, on the Main North Road between Melrose and Wilmington on the eastern side of the Flinders Range.

GATHERING MATERIALS

Lyle began to frequent demolition sites and when the old jail at Port Augusta was torn down to make way for a modern complex he gathered about 153 tonnes of sandstone, as well as a smaller amount of bluestone, from the site for his planned house. The historic sandstone had been hewn from the ground in the Middle East (Israel maybe), and loaded onto windjammers as ballast before being dumped on the wharf in Port Augusta when the tall ships were reloaded with wheat and wool.

When National Rail was privatised in the early 1990s, Lyle acquired jarrah sleepers and rail irons. The closing of the shipyards in Whyalla furnished him with beautiful long Oregon timbers. Later, from searching in the *Trading Post*, he obtained 90-year-old parquetry flooring when a Masonic Lodge was upgraded in North Adelaide. Other materials including wharf timbers, a spiral staircase and an aluminium radar dish platform were acquired as the work progressed.

LEARNING SKILLS

Having collected all this material, Lyle could see that his dream of setting up a permaculture garden, building his house and being self-sufficient was a long way off while working full time, so he resigned from work and took three months leave overseas. On his return he was on the dole for a time and therefore eligible to join a Kick Start scheme, where people were employed and taught new skills to enable them to rejoin the workforce. Lyle joined the scheme to learn stone masonry, carpentry and first aid. He laid stone for three months, learnt a lot, became proficient and discovered he really enjoyed working with stone.

Armed with his new skills, Lyle embarked on building his house. He drew up the plans himself and submitted them to a friend who was a trainee architect and glad of the experience.

BUILDING

The house is a rectangle with an open living area facing north for optimum heat for the solar panels. There are two bedrooms to the south-west, a study faces south and the bathroom, laundry and toilet are also on the southern side. In the winter, the southern rooms are closed off to warm the main living area and in the summer they are opened for cooling purposes. Flooring is parquetry and slate, the latter being brought in from the Horseshoe Range across the Willochra Plains to the east of Lyle's

Right is Lyle's historic sandstone house under construction, with the completed work of art below.

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house. Help in laying the parquetry floor came from an Englishman competent in this skill who was travelling around Australia. Eaves are 1200 millimetres on the north side for extra summer shade.

Foundations

Under the guidance of an old friend excavation work began with the levelling of an area into the hillside for a slab.

Not wanting to use chemicals, Lyle chose Termimesh (a stainless steel mesh) as termite protection. Two-metre wide verandas face the prevailing weather to prevent water from reaching or lying near the foundations. No vegetation whatsoever is allowed to grow near the foundation. When the slab was laid, a course of bituminous tar was laid, then a damp course on the tar and finally the stone. The sides of the slab are painted with tar. Lyle is adamant about the need to be vigilant at all times where termites are concerned.

Bushfire Protection

For protection from bushfires, which can approach from any direction, a ring of hard-core shale was laid around the house, and beyond that a circular driveway. A future plan is to install fire sprinklers. Deciduous trees have been grown to act as a shade barrier in the summer, let in the winter sun and also act as a fire retardant.

Walls

Once the slab was laid, work on the walls began. The walls, which are load bearing, are half a metre thick. The stone has been faced inside and out. A lot of it has been hen-pecked by whoever faced the stone. Lyle wonders whether it was the prisoners as they helped build their jail, or perhaps slaves from some Middle Eastern port who loaded the stone onto the tall ships.

Roof

The roof of corrugated iron is insulated and has exposed beams of Oregon timber. Supporting the roof are 300-millimetre thick jarrah dead-ends, recycled from the railways, standing in the centre of the house. It gives a very chunky appearance.

Internal Fittings

Door frames were planed and prepared from old wharf timbers and two-metre high window frames were planed from jarrah rail sleepers. The windows are double-glazed.

In the wet area the harder bluestone has been used because of its water repellent qualities. Bluestone has also been used in the retaining walls outside, along with rail irons salvaged from the now deleted line that used to run in front of the house.

Lyle Dudley, a forerunner of alternative lifestyles in his region.

Internal walls not built of stone are recycled jarrah, pine, meranti and baltic pine floorboards.

Because he likes to entertain, Lyle built a mezzanine floor over part of the open living area for extra space and converted a signals ladder into a ladder up to the mezzanine floor. When its premises were modernised, a spiral staircase from the Poinsettia Motel in Port Augusta was discarded. The staircase now leads to the mezzanine floor, part of which is made up of an aluminium radar dish platform.

Power and Water

A solar hot water system has been installed and a slow combustion wood stove as a back-up to the solar system. The house runs on solar and wind power and there is a back-up generator. 'But most of the time', Lyle is pleased to say, 'the sun and wind power is sufficient'.

Water to the house is gravity fed from a tank further up the hill above the house. In a rainfall of 533 millimetres, Lyle is able to catch 205,000 litres of water in tanks. He is proud of being self-sufficient in water and power.

Lyle's one regret is that the local council was too conservative to be sympathetic to his application for a composting toilet. He had to compromise with a conventional water closet. Now, with water restrictions and a dying River Murray, he really wishes he had that composting toilet.

A STORY IN EVERY STONE

There is a story in every stone and piece of wood. The three-metre by four-metre bench in the kitchen was a post office counter made of now rare red cedar from NSW. The counter was collected and used by Lyle's grandfather at Glandore when he was the unofficial postmaster there and bequeathed to Lyle's father who used it in his workshop. Thinking to preserve it, he dressed it with sump oil and nearly ruined it. It then found its way into Lyle's house: 'It was a nightmare sanding it back', he admits.

Lyle tells how he found an old brass button in a crack in a stone when he was cleaning it. He likes to think it came from overseas, perhaps placed there by a slave or maybe a jail inmate. There are carvings in the stones that could be hieroglyphics, but then there is the word 'when' carved, also the words 'horse 1927'. Other stones carry carved Roman numerals and there is the odd stone that can be traced to having been used in the main entrance archway of the jail. These have been carved by a machine and are about 500 millimetres long and 400 millimetres thick. These stones are different from the others and Lyle conjectures that they might be Sydney sandstone.

NOTHING SLAPDASH

Labour in building the house was intense and hard. The house has not been cheap, costing $100,000 to build, including $5000 in hired labour. But then, expense was not spared when it came to setting up solar and wind power systems expected to last a lifetime and Lyle bought a top-of-the-range wood combustion stove and copper hot water tank.

Lyle has become a forerunner of alternative lifestyles in a very conservative locality. He is often looked upon with some suspicion because of his passion for the environment. However, he has resisted compromise. He estimates that 90 percent of the material in the house was recycled and has no regrets about the cost: 'There is nothing slapdash about it. I could have been slapdash, but the house is a one-off. I had to do it; it is a work of art.'

An Indigenous Suburban Garden

by Arvid Goetesson, Karin Calley, Paul Hodgkinson, Canberra, ACT.

Arvid Goetesson and Karin Calley wanted to live in central Canberra but surrounded by local species. Together with Paul Hodgkinson, a horticulturist specialising in indigenous native plant revegetation, they have successfully transformed their weedy suburban garden into a diverse little native grassland.

We (Karin and Arvid) moved to Canberra in 1999 and bought an ex-government house on a corner block in Ainslie. From the window we could see the bush on Mount Ainslie, always beautiful as the light changes through the day. The mountain is only a few blocks away from our house in physical space, but it might just as well have been a continent away. We were surrounded by lawns and hedges and flower beds. This was the first piece of Australia we had owned and we wanted to make it count. So, from our weedy backyard, we launched a challenge to the suburban landscape.

Our house in Canberra just before we bought it, complete with privet hedge.

CONSERVATION IN THE SUBURBS

Australian gardeners tend to be surprisingly protective of their cottage borders, rose trellises, manicured lawns and privet hedges. The grey-green and yellow distance is considered prickly, unpleasant and a stranger to be kept at bay and appreciated, if at all, from a distance. The urban landscape bears this out.

Arvid is an immigrant from Sweden where there is a tradition of public interest in the natural environment. He was surprised that most Australians seem detached from the continent we inhabit. Most of us live in suburbs, which are environmentally degraded areas. The occasional surviving remnant native species, which are usually not deliberately cultivated, are more often treated as weeds.

The predominantly exotic vegetation in these suburban wastelands is responsible for the corresponding, and increasing, scarcity of insects, small birds and other native animals. But this large-scale environmental impoverishment does not seem to cause any general concern. To the contrary, Australians also keep introduced animals as pets, as if the intention was to comprehensively cleanse the landscape of the last remnants of the local wildlife. And the suburbs keep growing and the lawns and hedges and flower beds consume, at a frightening rate, the once enormous variety of unique and beautiful Australian landscapes.

Of those who do have some regard for native wildlife, many seem to believe that the urban environments don't count, that defending Australia's biodiversity is exclusively a matter of conservation of limited areas that have been set aside for that purpose. Others plant a few native shrubs promoted by gardening magazines as bird attracting, without giving any thought to the fact that Australia is a big country with an enormous variety of natural landscapes. A flowering shrub from Perth is almost as out of place in an ACT grassland as a poplar.

We see things differently. Instead of relegating conservation to the distance we believe that we all need to begin thinking about the original complexity of the environment in which our so-called gardens are located for three important reasons.

- First, it is a misconception that our urban areas are neutral zones. We might in fact be bridgeheads, areas where invasive species such as plants like Chilean needle grass and birds like Indian mynahs take hold and from which they spread.
- Second, these weedy and rapidly spreading suburbs are areas where new generations of Australians are brought up, thinking that a house should be surrounded by a 'garden' and that gardens are lawns containing beds of colourful exotics, surrounded by privet hedges and rose bushes. Urban revegetation will encourage people to see and begin to internalise the beauty of the local ecosystems.
- Third, our small residential blocks are, for most people, the only areas where we have total control over

Covering the nature strip with cardboard and mulch was a family affair.

land management. We have to start somewhere, developing techniques that can be implemented in the re-creation of Australian landscapes. By doing this we can encourage biodiversity in each region.

• Fourth, our blocks (no matter how small) can become part of a green corridor or add to one. Green corridors are vital in cities. Many of our birds are migratory and need to fly over the built-up areas, while others need to have green areas and linkages so they can safely move from one area to another. Instead, Australia's cities are growing and more areas are becoming housing estates and it is becoming harder for our fauna to find food and water in these urban deserts.

Every piece of land should be assisted to support Australian wildlife to the extent that this is compatible with its function. Local species should be the first choice for any public plantings. For example, the hill over Parliament House could be covered by weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), a beautiful local grass that makes a fine lawn.

The term 'nature strip' is a humorous one when most nature strips are dead zones for most of the year, except perhaps for spring when they come alive with introduced plants or pests such as Chilean needle grass and Paterson's curse. All public land and floral plantings could use local species, as appears to be the theme in some of the more recent plantings at the Australian National University. For example, the most appropriate vegetation for most Canberra residential leases is re-created grassland or grassy woodland. Of course, the function (residential block) requires that such re-creation should be managed so that it does not pose a fire, pedestrian or traffic hazard, by obstructing the line of sight, and that it does not harbour dangerous animals.

EXPERIMENTING

Because what we wanted to achieve has so rarely been done, we had to experiment. When we moved in, in March 1999, we removed the roses, lilacs and privet hedge and planted some Australian bushes and trees for screening. Then we hired a rotary hoe and dug up the lawn. Paul visited for the first time in November 1999. We had been talking to him about the possibility of his horticultural business supplying plugs and seeds for the project, but we had already sown exotic lawn seed over part of the old lawn that had been dug up by the rotary hoe, an act of cowardice that we are still regretting (and weeding out). We wanted an area of short soft grass where our baby could play. Paul suggested that *Microlaena* would make a good lawn and that it could be directly sown. We had been told by other sources that *Microlaena* could only be successfully grown from plugs, which would have been a costly exercise if we had to buy them, hence the regrettable Canturf digression. Yes, there was much to learn.

Paul advised us to lay cardboard and mulch over the whole block to smother the old lawn and then to plant and sow into it when it had settled. So, in December 1999 we covered the whole garden, excluding the small area sown with lawn, with flattened cardboard boxes (acquired from the city Supabarn at no expense) that we watered and weighed down with bricks and rocks. Newspaper will do just as well, but you need to lay it down thickly, with a good overlap to prevent cracks that weeds can wriggle through, so you need an enormous amount of it.

Our daughter reading up on grassland flora. The lawn was Canturf, which we dug up and replaced with local *Microlaena*.

Then came the mulch – commercial shredded garden waste, and the cheapest we could find. By lucky accident the cheapest mulch on this occasion happened to be just the right mulch for the job, partially decomposed pruning mulch, the type produced by tree surgeons who mulch up their own waste. Buy the more finely shredded type. For economic reasons we could only spread just enough to cover the cardboard. We watered it all down again and left it. A little herbicide was used to eliminate the couch grass that emerged through gaps in the cardboard. We planned, under Paul's direction, to grow and plant our own plugs of indigenous grasses and to transplant mature plants from nearby building sites.

Then, in January 2000, we decided to take on the nature strip as well. The rotary hoe had balked at the tough mat of roots, so we recruited both our mothers (Arvid's mother Ulla was visiting from Sweden and Karin's mother Laila from Sydney) to help lay cardboard, this time directly over an unmown mass of lawn grass and weeds. January also brought plant identification education and seed collection with Paul.

More about the progress of our indigenous garden next issue.

Putting A Little Ginger In Your Life

by Susan Hands, Ingham, Qld.

Take it from me, it's well worth your while to try making ginger beer. From the day you take that first tangy thirst-quenching mouthful, you'll have acquired a new love, and, if you've made it yourself, which after all is the aim of this exercise, then you'll have a steady supply resting there on your shelves, just waiting to be opened.

TO MAKE YOUR GINGER BEER

The Very First Time

1 cup sugar
1 dsp ground ginger
strained juice of 2 lemons
10 cups water

In a deep pot or plastic bucket mix together the sugar, ginger, lemon juice and water.

Allow to stand for three days.

Pour off most of the water and put 'the bug' (the sludgy greyish stuff on the bottom is called the bug) into a smaller jar.

Feed the bug daily with three teaspoons of ginger and two teaspoons of sugar. Feed for four days.

To Make Up

Mix 20 cups of hot water with three cups of sugar and let cool.

Add two dessertspoons of ginger and strained juice of four lemons.

Pour bug into this and let stand for 24 hours, stirring occasionally but no less than four hours before bottling.

Strain carefully, leaving the sludgy greyish stuff on the bottom of your bucket. You put this back into the bug bottle and feed it daily with one teaspoon of ginger and one teaspoon of sugar. In seven days it's ready to be made up again.

Bottle the strained ginger beer. The ginger beer is ready to drink in three days.

Any type of screw top bottle is suitable for your ginger beer, only remember not to screw the top on too tight, you don't want to be cleaning it off your walls or ceiling.

But, leaving your ginger beer there, under the laundry tubs, and getting back to the bug. After about four weeks you will find that the bug you've been feeding will have done its own thing and doubled in size. You can now pour half the bug into a separate jar and use it for cooking.

USES FOR YOUR GINGER BEER

If you have any ginger beer left after the relos have visited, try these ideas.

In Cooking

We all know how useful ginger is in cooking cakes and desserts. Those ginger fanatics among us could tell you it's tops with feathers and fins as well. But back to cakes. How often does a recipe call for a half-cup of milk or a cup of water? Surprisingly enough, in a lot of recipes you can substitute ginger beer (homemade of course) instead of the water or milk. Muffins and luncheon cakes are absolutely delicious and don't seem to miss the milk at all. Still, if it worries you, you can always add the ginger beer and drop in a tablespoon of powdered milk.

Luncheon Cake with Ginger Beer

2 cups SR flour
2 rounded tbsp margarine
¾ cup caster sugar
1 egg
6 tbsp ginger beer
extra sugar for sprinkling

Grease and flour cake tin. Sift flour into basin, add margarine. Rub this until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add sugar, mix. Add egg, mix. Add ginger beer. Spoon into prepared tin, sprinkle extra sugar over top. Cook in moderate oven for approximately one hour.

Quick Cake Ginger Beer Style

2 tbsp butter
½ cup sugar
2 eggs
2 cups SR flour
1 tbsp powdered milk
1 cup ginger beer

Cream butter and sugar, add eggs one at a time, beat well. Add sifted flour and powdered milk and ginger beer. Mix well. Cook in moderate oven for one hour.

As A Gift

A bottle of your homemade brew could be more than welcome when you go visiting. Take it along under your arm or give it with a big red bow round the neck (of the bottle).

USES FOR THE BUG

In Cooking

Once again, it's great in cooking – and you've got it there rumbling away on its shelf, ever-ready to be used, rather like your bottle of vanilla. Only vanilla doesn't advertise its presence nearly as readily.

Ginger Beer Self-Saucing Pudding

1 rounded tbsp butter or margarine
½ cup sugar
1 egg
1 cup SR flour

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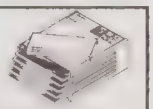
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1 cup ginger beer

Sauce

½ cup sugar
1 dsp of the bug
1½ cups boiling ginger beer

Cream butter and sugar, add egg, beat well. Add sifted flour and stir in ginger beer. Pour into greased baking dish. Sprinkle over a mixture of extra sugar and bug. Gently pour over hot ginger beer. Bake in moderate oven 35 – 40 minutes.

Steamed Ginger Beer Pudding

1 tbsp butter or margarine
½ cup sugar
1 tsp bicarb soda
1 cup boiling ginger beer
½ pkt mixed fruit
1 tbsp bug
1 lge cup plain flour
pinch salt

Mix butter, sugar, soda, with boiling ginger beer. Cool. Add fruit, bug, then flour and salt. Steam for three hours.

Can be mixed the night before if necessary. If a tin is not available, you can use empty pea or corn tins or similar, grease well and only three-quarters fill.

As A Gift

As I mentioned before, the bug does its own thing every four weeks or so. Well then, this gives you a perfect gift, place half your divided lees in a bottle, which of course you have decorated with your own hands, or the kids' hands if you're giving it to Grandma.

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Don't forget to include the instructions for feeding and bottling the bug.

And while you're at it why not use the 'ginger' theme for the whole of your gift giving.

Spiced Tea

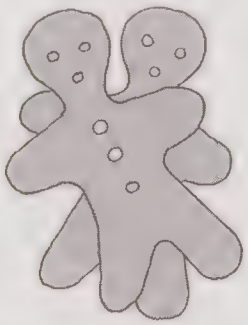
4 cups water
2 tsp chopped green ginger
8 whole cloves
5 cm piece cinnamon

Put all together in a pot and simmer for five minutes. Cool and strain. Spiced tea may be used in punches and drinks with a rum base.

Gingerbread Men

2 cups plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 – 2 tsp ground ginger
1½ tbsp butter
¼ cup caster sugar
1 tbsp golden syrup
1 egg
1 tbsp ginger beer
dried fruit/sweets for decoration, optional

Sift the flour, baking powder and ground ginger into a mixing bowl, rub in the butter until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add sugar, put the golden syrup in a basin and stand over hot water until it becomes warm and liquid, add to the ingredients in the mixing bowl. Stir in the ginger beer and the egg. Knead well, until a firm rolling consistency is reached. Roll out on a lightly floured board until just over 5 mm thickness is reached. Either use a cutter or cut out a figure in thick paper and lay this on the dough and cut round. Lightly grease a baking tray, put figures on, press currants into the dough for eyes and buttons, use cherries or Smarties for nose and mouth. Bake in moderately hot oven 12 – 15 minutes.



Ginger Fudge

1.25 kg granulated sugar
600 ml milk
2 tbsp margarine
1½ cups chopped ginger or preserved ginger

Put sugar and milk into a large saucepan and soak for one hour or longer. Add the margarine. Heat slowly, stirring all the time until sugar is dissolved. Bring to boiling point and, using thermometer, boil to 115° C. Remove from stove, add ginger. Leave to cool slightly then beat until the mixture is thick. Pour into oiled tins and mark into squares with a pointed knife just before the fudge sets. When quite cold, cut, divide into pieces and store in an airtight tin with greaseproof paper between the layers.

Chinese Mixed Pickles

Pickling Liquid

2¼ cups sugar
2¼ cups white vinegar
1 tsp salt
1¼ cups flat ginger beer

Combine all ingredients in saucepan, stir over low heat until sugar dissolves. Bring to boil, remove from heat and allow to cool.

Meanwhile, prepare vegetables.

Vegetables

2 carrots
1 lge cucumber
1 red capsicum
1 green capsicum
4 sticks celery
10 cm piece of green ginger
8 shallots
1 sml zucchini or lge white Chinese radish

Wash all vegetables. Peel carrots and radish, cut into thin strips. Cut cucumber lengthwise, remove seeds, cut into strips. Wash and seed capsicum, cut into 2.5 cm cubes. Slice celery diagonally. Peel ginger, slice thinly. Slice shallots diagonally. Put large saucepan of water on to boil, bring to fast boil. Add prepared vegetables, then remove from heat immediately. Leave vegetables in water for two minutes. Drain vegetables, leave to dry for several hours. Pack vegetables firmly into large preserving jar. Pour cold liquid carefully into jar, ensuring vegetables are completely covered.

Seal, store in refrigerator. Can be used in one week.

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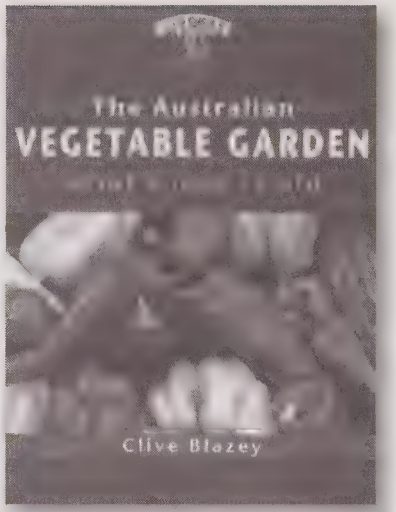

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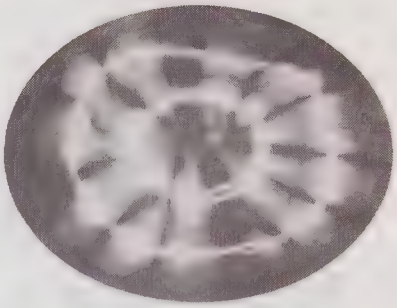
Tie-Dyeing For Fun And Money

by Bob Rankin, Port Macquarie, NSW.



We enjoyed it in the sixties and seventies, now it's back. Reaquaint yourself with this fun, creative craft.

The art of tie-dyeing fabric is very easy to learn, requires minimal equipment, and even a beginner can produce unique and spectacular results. It is one of those special hobbies that not only brings great pleasure to the artist, but can also quickly earn you a little extra cash.

Basically, tie-dyeing consists of tying knots in a couple of metres of cloth and immersing it in dye, taking it out and drying it, untying it and repeating the process with a different coloured dye. The knots prevent the dye reaching parts of the cloth and, after repeating the process several times, depending on what colour and strength dyes you use, your cloth will end up with a multicoloured pattern on it that in many cases can be quite beautiful. The remarkable thing about tie-dyeing is that each cloth you do will end up unique. You will have produced something that no one else in the world has ever seen.

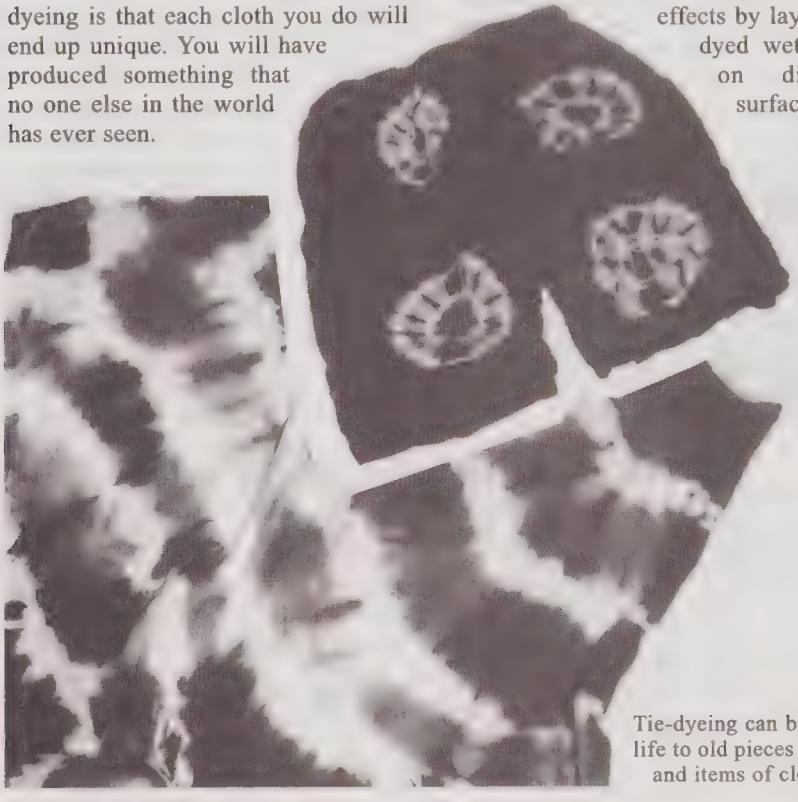
All you need to start is a length of cloth. I find the best is a two-metre length of 105-centimetre wide light bleached cotton (mull). When finished, this can be worn as a lalalava or sarong. If you want to make a dress or a shirt, you can just as easily dye a three-metre length or, if you like, tie-dye the finished garment. You can dye quite a few pieces of cloth in each batch of dye. You will soon learn from experience how much dye to use.

You will also need your dyes, a couple of large basins in which to dye your fabric, a bucket of water in which to rinse your hands (you should be wearing rubber gloves if you don't want to end up with multicoloured fingers), string to help knot the fabric, scissors, and somewhere to lay out your fabric to dry.

You can get different effects by laying the dyed wet fabric on different surfaces such as straw mats, wire netting or even corrugated iron. You can even get a stipple effect by sprinkling rock salt on the drying fabric, and you can add to the designs by laying stencils on it. The possibilities are endless, as you will soon learn by doing.

There are plenty of good books available on tie-dyeing and the various dye manufacturers are only too pleased to provide advice. There are also a number of different dyes on the market. I prefer the ones you can buy ready to use in one-litre bottles. They may be a little more expensive, but this is more than compensated by their convenience. I find one of the best is Silhouette supplied by CCG Industries Ltd, PO Box 9523, Newmarket, Auckland NZ.

If you want to try a great hobby that the whole family can enjoy, I heartily recommend tie-dyeing. Get on to the Internet now, or down to the library, to find out more about it and don't be afraid to start. I guarantee you'll be surprised at how easy and enjoyable it is.



Tie-dyeing can bring new life to old pieces of fabric and items of clothing.

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Lavender Bottles

by Sharon Greenaway, Strathfieldsaye, Vic.

I love the smell of lavender and enjoy picking stems from my own lavender plants. The only problem I find is that when you tie them together, eventually the little florets of lavender fall all over the place.

This year I decided to make some lavender bottles. With the flowers encased in their own stems I would have the benefit of the fragrance and moth repellence of lavender without the mess.

I found these lavender bottles fiddly to make, but the lavender fragrance wafting up is very relaxing. You can make them while watching television or during other occupations that don't take all your attention.

If you have lavender in the garden and are interested in doing something new with it, give this a try.

Steps in creating a lavender bottle.

MATERIALS

You will need 1.5 metres of ribbon no wider than six millimetres. If you're making them for Christmas presents, choose appropriate colours such as red, green, gold or silver. If they're for a special person, make them in the recipient's favourite colour.

Cut at least 12 long, straight lavender stems with flowers. They need to be freshly picked when you use them. Make sure they are all around the same length. The more stems you have the fatter the bottle will be. Always use an even number.

INSTRUCTIONS

Carefully strip off all the leaves and bunch the stems together with the flower heads facing down.

Tie the pieces of lavender together with the ribbon, leaving about five centimetres of ribbon to tie a loop. Pull it tight then tie a loop for hanging.

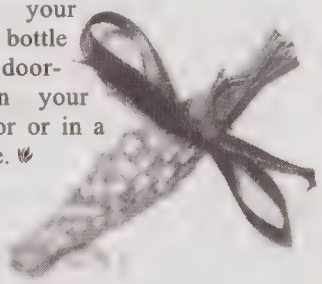
Take the first stem to the left of the knot. Gently press a section of the stem about one centimetre above the ribbon, flattening it as much as possible. Then carefully fold the stem back down over the flowers, weaving a piece of ribbon over it.

Take the next stem of lavender and repeat, weaving the ribbon under this piece. Repeat this process until all stems are folded, remembering to evenly cover the flowers. The idea is that you are encasing the flowers in the woven ribbon and stems.

Ribbon is woven in and out of stems.

Now continue weaving the ribbon in and out through the stems until the flowers are fully encased. Pull and tie off the ribbon as tightly as you can; this will give you the bottle shape. Cut the ribbon, and tie a pretty bow over the tied off area. If you like, you can add another ribbon to the top.

Hang your lavender bottle over a doorway, on your front door or in a wardrobe.



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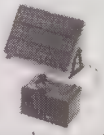

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The Skim Milk Powder Secret

by Bob Rankin, Port Macquarie, NSW.

Apart from compost, skim milk powder could be the cheapest and most effective soil conditioner there is. Gardening lore abounds with old maxims about the health value of parsley and other herbs, the effectiveness of carrots in improving sight, the importance of planting by phases of the moon and so on. Many of these have proven true and that is why I don't dismiss any new ideas that come along from time to time.

One of the latest is the claim that hard rock music kills plants and light classical music promotes their growth. If you don't believe me check out: www.av1611.org/neutral.html

I haven't had a chance to test this because my neighbour objected to loudspeakers playing night and day in the garden, but I have checked out another claim that skim milk powder makes your vegetables grow much better.

The tomatoes I grew in one plot last year were terrible – skimpy and unhealthy and with a very poor yield. This year I raised the bed with a layer of bricks around the side, added a bag of compost and, before I transplanted my seedlings, scattered three handfuls of skim milk powder on top of the bed.

The difference is unbelievable. Six beautifully healthy plants all the same size and absolutely loaded with unblemished fruit. Obviously the compost and better drainage had some effect, but I have concluded that the real reason for this transformation lies in the skim milk powder. I don't know what there is in skim milk powder that seems to promote such good growth, but other gardeners have reported similar success. All I know is that it worked for me and I am going to stick with it from now on. An added bonus with skim milk is that if you mix it with water you can spray it on plants to get rid of aphids. Also, a solution of nine parts water to one part milk (that can be made up with skim milk powder) can be sprayed on plants as an antifungal treatment.

Where else can you find so cheap and effective a natural fertiliser and spray?

I Wish I'd Known About Snakes!

by Gwen Deem, Cougal, NSW.

Sadly, because of illness, my husband Richard and I have had to sell our beautiful property at Yerra, about 30 kilometres west of Maryborough, Queensland. When we first bought it a local farmer joked that he hoped I liked snakes as Yerra was the brown snake capital of Queensland. In fact, after several sightings of these dangerous snakes, as well as a good assortment of red-bellied blacks and others, I no longer regarded it as a joke and reckon he was probably telling the truth.

My first snake sighting was of a dead one. It was roadkill but still intact. I insisted Richard stop the car and let me have a really good inspection so I would know what a brown snake looked like up close. Long and ugly was my impression, and it didn't make me feel any better or braver about them.

The next one I saw was in the kitchen. I'd been up the back paddocks helping to remove a pile of old rotting fence posts intermingled with sheets of rusty corrugated iron. I was convinced a snake would be lurking under everything I lifted, so, taking a deep breath, I cautiously tackled the task at hand, silently chanting 'Face your fears, face your fears'. I'd once read that using that technique when faced with a particular fear would cancel it out and make me feel victorious. As I didn't see a single snake during the whole task, I felt pretty good.

So, with all that behind me, I decided it was time for lunch. Soup and sandwiches would be fine, I thought, driving back to the house. I took my dirty clothes off in the laundry on the back porch, wrapped a towel around myself, washed my face and hands and went into the kitchen.

The first thing I saw as I stepped into the kitchen was a long, brown snake. Not able to get traction on the polished floors boards it was slithering and sliding all over the place. All thought of facing my fears evaporated as I backed away, wondering where Maya, our elderly Siamese cat was. I quickly checked all the rooms on my side of the kitchen and didn't find her, but, as the kitchen was built in the centre of the old farmhouse, that still left three rooms unchecked on the snake's side. No way was I crossing that kitchen!

Sorry Maya, I silently apologised, and with only the towel and my gumboots still on I jumped into the Pajero and headed back up to the paddock to collect Richard. He swears to this day that the Pajero was leaping higher than a kangaroo as I bounced it, horn blasting, over the orchard mounds and hills.

Back at the house he quickly despatched my worst fear outside, shaking his head saying, 'It's only a tree snake'. Was that supposed to make me feel better? It didn't change the fact that it was long, brown and in my kitchen. Obviously, the 'Facing Your Worst Fears' affirmation hadn't worked for me. I should add that Richard is a greenie who doesn't share my fear of snakes. He's been known to swerve around them, and even the cane toads he encounters on the road, rather than run them over.

Returning from town the next day, I kept the ute idling while I reached into our mailbox and retrieved the carton of milk, then, reaching back for the bread, I spotted something that moved. Intrigued, I leapt out of the ute and looked inside the mailbox. Coiled up next to the loaf of bread was, yes, you guessed it, a snake.

As it was only the previous day that we'd had the snake inside, I thought Richard was playing a joke and had put a rubber snake there to trick me. I stood staring at it, thinking how lifelike it was, when suddenly its head lifted and its forked tongue flicked out. On jelly-like legs I crawled back into the ute and raced home to ring Richard to warn him not grab the bread until he'd checked out the mailbox.

Dead snakes stink! And never more so than when I was weeding the vegetable garden. This elaborate structure had been constructed to keep out every imaginable insect (including ones that I learned later were 'goodies for gardens'). It was covered all over and around with a small-meshed wire. One day while weeding I smelt something really disgusting, so I sang out to Richard, 'I reckon there's a dead rat in here'. I crawled around looking amongst all the tomatoes, lettuce and beans, trying to trace the smell. Eventually I gave up and went back to my weeding. Finally finished, I stood up and bumped my head on an object hanging down from the wire. Apparently, a carpet snake had tried to get inside, but had caught itself on the wire. My heart almost failed! But, at least I'd found the source of the smell.

One day I decided to go up to the back paddocks and collect cow manure for the orchard. The grass was short so I didn't wear my gumboots as I normally would, instead I chose joggers. The dung beetles had been busy and the rain had dissolved most of the pats, so there wasn't a lot to pick up. Deciding it was rather a waste of time, I started the ute and headed for home and a cuppa.

I was passing the largest of our three dams when I saw a spot where the cattle had been 'camping'. Protected by the trees were heaps of manure, so I climbed the fence and began shovelling it. I'd only collected one bagful when I felt a sharp painful 'jab' on the back of my leg. Spinning around, I saw two trickles of blood running down my leg. I searched around but saw nothing. Closer inspection showed up two puncture marks. 'Looks like a snakebite', I thought.

Before we go any further, let me say that I know what I should have done. I know I should have been carrying bandages, but was I? No! What I did do was tell myself that it probably wasn't a snake, for, if it was, wouldn't I have seen it? Convincing myself that I wasn't in imminent danger, I carried on collecting the manure, loaded it into the ute and finally headed home.

Still, thoughts were churning around in my head as I drove: 'If it was a snakebite, wouldn't I be feeling sick or dizzy or something by now?' Remembering that a delayed reaction sometimes occurs, I decided to ask my neighbour. 'What do you reckon this is?' I asked. 'You've been bitten by a snake. Quick lie down! I'll call the ambulance.' To cut a long story short, the ambulance arrived and my leg was put into an inflatable splint. I was taken to the hospital, where the puncture marks were identified as a snakebite, and, judging from the puncture marks, the doctor said it was a large one, but fortunately it hadn't venomated me. Apparently, this can happen for different reasons. Possibly it was a nonvenomous snake, or it could have been a warning bite, or the snake might have already used up its available venom. Lying in that hospital bed, I could just hear Richard's reaction to this: 'Bitten by a snake but you're still okay! See, I told you not to be afraid!'

Now we've moved to a smaller property in northern NSW. Yesterday a neighbour came to visit. Over a cuppa I asked the obvious question, 'What sort of snakes do you get around here?' 'All sorts! Big ones and heaps of them', he replied. And, judging by the length of the one lying on the verandah just outside the back door this morning, I'd say he's right.

But, although I can't say as I'll ever like snakes, my experiences with them have illustrated that as long as we respect each other and keep our distance we'll both be fine . . . or at least that's what I'm telling myself.

PESTICIDES KILL MORE BIRDS THAN VIRUS

New York State officials spraying poisons in the air to kill disease-spreading mosquitoes found that more birds died from the poison than from the disease. The officials were spraying for West Nile virus, which affects birds and also, to a minor extent, humans. The leading cause of death of birds collected for a study on the virus was pesticide poisoning, although the virus was a factor in some of the deaths. Some evidence exists that mosquito spraying actually increases infection rates in the birds that carry the virus by compromising their immune system. It is thought mosquitoes that survive insecticide exposure may be affected in ways that make them more efficient transmitters of the virus.

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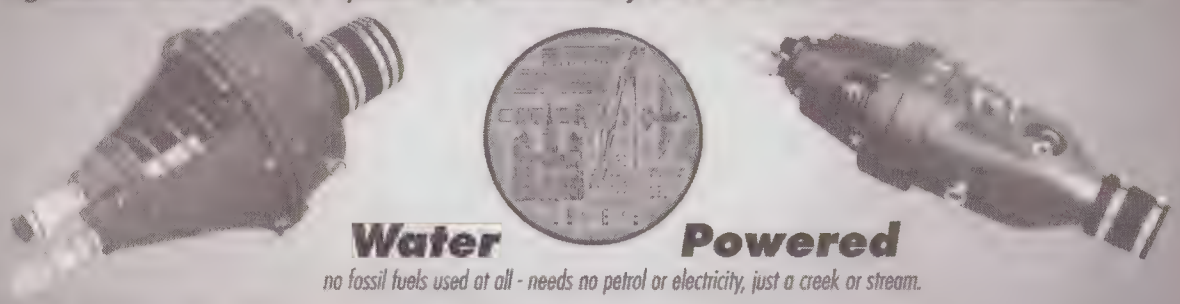

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GARDEN BIODIVERSITY

From Big Smoke To Black Stump

by Mary Horsfall, Euroa, Vic.

Last time I discussed ways we can all help encourage biodiversity by creating healthy soil, planting a variety of flowering plants and providing habitat for fauna. If you have a garden, you have a role to play, whether it's a tiny city garden or a farm garden of generous proportions. Here's how.

Ponds can add a peaceful ambience to a garden, as well as encouraging biodiversity.

SMALL CITY GARDENS

Even in the middle of large cities there is biodiversity, though most of it is not indigenous. In fact, modern cities have been likened to cliff and canyon ecosystems. Whether you have a pocket handkerchief-size garden or a balcony, you can still encourage biodiversity; some of it might even be indigenous. These suggestions will help.

• Forget lawn and large paved areas. You need to take full advantage of the space you have available for planting.

• Aim for a planting design that allows a variety of heights. Large trees are obviously out, but there are many attractive flowering small native trees and large shrubs to choose from. Ask local nurseries for appropriate suggestions to suit your area and specific site needs.

• No space for a pond? Go for attractive birdbaths or shallow bowls. You don't want birds or lizards to drown in attempting to drink or bathe, so place a rock or similar in the water and projecting slightly above the water level. Place it where you can see it from a window or deck. There might not be much birdlife in the city, but you could be surprised at the number of passing birds and insects that will fly in for a drink and a rest.

• Fill any small niche with plants such as erigeron, alyssum or dwarf lavenders that will flower over a long period and attract many beneficial insects. Birds, lizards and frogs will come in search of insect cuisine. Some native plants that will fit small niches, depending on your individual circumstances, include: *Leschenaultia* spp, *Brachyscome* spp, *Viola hederacea*, *Brunonia australis*, *Chrysocephalem* spp, *Craspedia glauca* and *Epacris* spp.

• Take advantage of vertical spaces such as walls, fences, verandah posts and trellises. Some useful native climbers include: *Clematis aristata*, *Pandorea pandorana*, *Billardiera scandens* and *Hardenbergia violacea*.

• Use hanging baskets.

• Window boxes and large pots can hold a surprising variety of plants. Do take care about where you position them; once full of damp soil they can be very heavy and almost impossible to move, or could even damage fragile old structures.

• Connect with your surroundings to multiply biodiversity benefits. If a neighbour has a garden, plant yours so they are continuous. If you are upstairs and a downstairs neighbour has a garden, plant tubs and window boxes with species that will grow down to meet those growing up from below.

• If these measures in your own garden don't satisfy your desire to conserve biodiversity, consider joining a local environment group, community garden or 'friends' of a nearby park. To make your mark in the broader environment there are many groups looking for volunteers; contact Greening Australia or the Australian Trust For Conservation Volunteers to find out how you can participate.

LARGER GARDENS

Size is always comparative, but the bigger the area the more scope there is for encouraging biodiversity. All the suggestions above can apply to larger gardens as well as small ones.

Ponds

A pond can add a new dimension to the garden. As well as providing a cool and tranquil feature for our enjoyment, it will attract birds, insects and frogs. There are many affordable preformed ponds on the market, or the more creative can construct their own. Do ensure that the pond has both deep and shallow areas to allow access, protection and escape options for pond dwellers. A log floated on top of the water will act as a safety platform for birds and frogs. Plant grasses and small overhanging plants around it to provide shelter, food and habitat for a variety of creatures. Frogs and fish are not necessarily compatible in a garden pond; many

fish will eat frog spawn or tadpoles, so find out before buying fish for your pond. Some native fish to try include: native pygmy perch, Murray River rainbow fish and common jollytail.

Plants

The larger the garden the more plant options you have. Environment groups, local councils, the Department of Sustainability and Environment or Greening Australia are all possible sources of information about plants indigenous to your locale and where to obtain them. This is easier to do in some areas than in others, but the more you ask around the more likely you are to find the information you need. Field days and environment expos are becoming more and more common and are often great sources of information.

Having found out some indigenous plants and where to obtain them, make realistic choices about what to plant in your garden. Half a dozen red gums on a suburban block, for example, is asking for trouble, even if your research indicates that's what originally grew there. Include taller trees, medium shrubs, understorey and ground cover to provide a variety of niches and maximise the fauna that will visit or take up residence. Try to design a planting scheme that will have some flowers all year round providing nectar for honey eaters and beneficial insects. Remember that many native birds will feed just as happily from exotic plants as from native flora, so your planting scheme does not need to be restricted to only indigenous species (see GR 160, page 48 for some suggestions).

The organisations listed above are also sources of information about endangered flora and fauna of your area. Find out what you can plant in your garden, or design features you can incorporate, to provide food, shelter and habitat for endangered fauna.

Alongside your research about suitable plants for your region and specific microclimate should go research about what not to plant. There are many dozens of environmental weeds that have a detrimental effect on our native biodiversity and probably hundreds more plants with weedy potential. Some environmentally aware councils have published illustrated guides and many nurseries are part of a nationwide program to prevent the sale of listed weeds, so information relevant to your area could be available through them. Not only is it necessary to avoid planting these weeds (especially close to bushland), but they must be disposed of in such a way that their seeds, bulbs and other vegetative material cannot spread in the environment.

Nesting Sites

Many of our native birds and animals need hollows in trees to nest and breed in. Trees of a sufficient size and age are in short supply in most areas, and any that we plant now will not have usable hollows in our lifetimes – it can take 100 years for a tree to develop a hollow big enough for even the smallest bird species to nest in. Any handyperson can construct nesting boxes that can be located in safe places. A bird observers club or Birds Australia can provide information about suitable sizes and locations of nests for specific bird species.

Domestic Pets

There is no point in attracting birds and native animals to your garden if there are domestic pets in residence to terrorise and possibly prey on them. Keep domestic pets under control; most especially keep cats indoors from dusk to after dawn, and locate food and water for native fauna in safe spots. A scrubby overgrown corner, while perhaps not being aesthetically pleasing to humans, will be a haven for wildlife.

Snakes

The natural world is not all birds singing in the trees, dragonflies flitting above the pond, butterflies floating from flower to flower and koalas lazing between forked branches. All these measures to make your garden attractive to native fauna are likely to attract snakes as well. Snakes have an important role in the ecosystem and keep many undesirable pests (rodents, for example) under control. They are likely to be quietly going about their business in more places than we are aware of. If you notice them in your garden, admire from a distance and let them go about their lives and teach children to respect them and stay away. If they are too close to homes, or even come indoors on occasion, they need to be removed by experts – call your local council or check the *Yellow Pages* phone directory for snake handlers.

FARM GARDENS

Many people living on the land have very large gardens surrounding the farm residence. Here there is great potential to encourage biodiversity.

Remnant Vegetation

Where space is not a problem, a full range of indigenous plants can be incorporated as well as favourite exotics. If the farm has windbreaks or biolinks or swards of remnant vegetation, the farm garden can merge with these. Remnant vegetation close to the garden is likely to include old and dead or dying trees; these should be left standing so animals and birds can use the nesting hollows and water birds such as ibis can roost.

Lakes

Ponds can be large enough to be called lakes and will provide habitat for ducks and other water birds. Native fish suitable for large ponds include: golden perch, silver perch and blackfish. The pond or lake can double as part of the property's bushfire protection strategy.

Plant Protection

Large native (and farm) animals can cause problems in the garden, so sturdy fencing and plant guards are important to protect young plants.

Windbreaks

It's a good idea when establishing a farm garden to plant windbreaks of hardy native and indigenous species at a distance from the house. Gardens closer to the house can include species that need more care and that will benefit from the protection of the windbreak as it grows. The biodiversity of bird and insect life encouraged by the windbreak plants will keep the rest of the garden relatively pest free.

Environmental Weeds

It's especially important to prevent environmental weeds from escaping into bushland. Remember that many native plants not indigenous to the area can become weeds outside their normal range. Cootamundra wattles, for example, were (and sometimes still are) often incorporated in windbreaks for their fast growth and hardiness; it's these very characteristics that have allowed them to propagate at an alarming rate to the detriment of other ecosystems.

Termite Deception

by Roberino, Woolgoolga, NSW.

If you are going to build or buy a house in termite country, but don't like the thought of toxic chemicals near the house for your family and pets to come into contact with, here are some ideas to try.

Termites are absolute destroyers and I've seen a few houses that had to be demolished because of their activities. One house in Far North Queensland was eaten from the ridge beam downwards. A vine from an overhanging tree was their way into the roof. Lantana, roses, vines, just about any tree or shrub touching the house will allow these devils to circumvent any type of anti-ant regime you like. Who reckons insects are stupid?

White ants, as we call the termites that go for timber in a big way, are relatively silent, 24-hour-a-day furious workers munching away at our pride and joy. Some people with good hearing say they can hear them inside houses, others say they can smell them.

One check to make if buying a house is to test any woodwork with a small screwdriver or bradawl where the mark is not glaringly visible, such as on skirting boards. Press quite firmly. The skirting board may seem perfect on the face of it, but will be paper thin on the outside if termites are present. They may have only been active for a few weeks, so it's wise to make a thorough check in every room. Look under the floor if you can; 'tracks' may be hard to find so have a strong bright torch.

Check the grounds outside around the house and big trees for tracks as well as any timber that has been on the ground for awhile. You really don't want a huge repair bill the day you move into your pride and joy, so be thorough. Alternatively, hire a building surveyor, an architect, a building inspector, a pre-purchase property inspector – someone who has professional negligence insurance just in case mistakes are made, and get a certificate from them. Consider the cost of the building and don't get someone who will be happy with a slab of beer who won't take long because he's desperate to drink that slab ASAP. The credit union will be more impressed too with your choice as it's really their money that's buying this roof over your head. If you are still paranoid about white ants, get a termite inspector, who will give you another certificate.

TRY A DECOY

If you find your land is infested with termites, you can do a number of things. As most parts of Australia have termites, it's best to do something now rather than later. Some distance away from the existing or future house you can construct a decoy. Here's an idea to try. Chat up the local paper shop for permission to take all their old unsold newspapers and magazines free of charge. They may want some assurance that you are not going to resell these items, so explain that it's for landfill, recycling, planting trees, mulching plants and as a termite decoy. Once you get into the swing of it you will do all these things with old papers, trust me. They are a fabulous resource and are returning the trees to where they should be anyway.

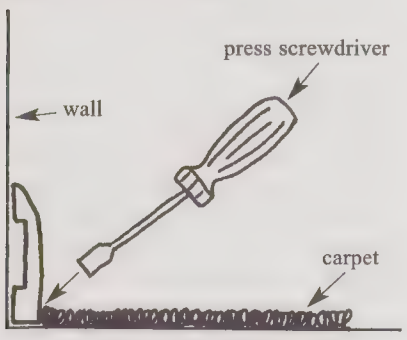
The termites will attack the decoy in preference to your house as it's much easier chewing than a hunk of hardwood. Make the newspapers into a gradually sloping mound all around, and some distance from, your house. Once the papers are at a height you desire, you can cover them with 30 centimetres of soil and plant some native trees. The newspapers will absorb any rain and the trees will love it. Or you could try a vegie garden here, a cottage garden or herbs. If your land is prone to flooding, the embankment will give you some leeway when it stabilises. Check with old-timers how high the water comes at flood times and build the mound accordingly.

Once the decoy is well established you can gently peep under it occasionally. When you've got a huge population of termites just call in the pro termite busters. The toxins are well away from the house using this method, but after this I would not be growing food plants there ever again.

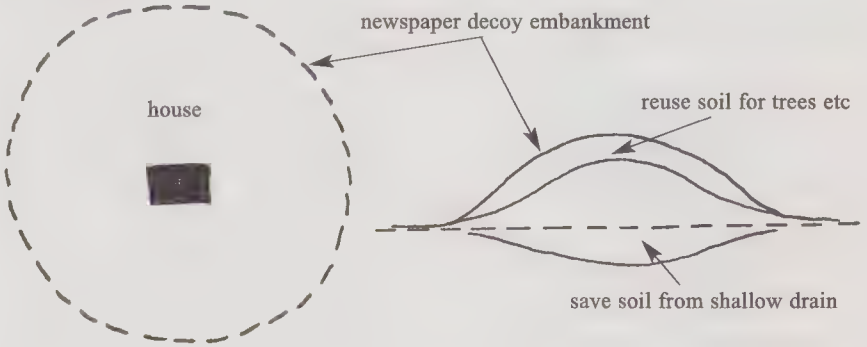
OTHER WAYS

Fine mesh such as Termimesh surrounding the house can be dug into a

Simple Check For Termites



Decoy Mound



trench to deter termites. Ask the experts to do it and get a certificate from them.

There is a fine gravel specifically made for stopping termites.

TRACKS

Tracks usually go from tree to tree. They are raised slightly above the surface of the land and are about one centimetre wide. The track might go up the tree too. You can check to see if the track is in use by brushing it lightly with a stick so you don't leave your scent. It's best if they don't know that you know where they are, so that if you wish to have them exterminated you can direct a professional to a track and he can track them to their nest, thereby getting rid of the whole shooting match.

Contacts

Archicentre – building advisory service of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, ph: 1300-134-513 – local call charge.

The Australian Property Institute, ph: 1800-818-867 – free call.

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, ph: 02-9712-8822 (NSW), or 03-9326-7100 (Vic). All numbers are supplied by Telstra Directory Service.

The old, highly toxic termite treatments are now banned. It was a council requirement with our new house that the under-house area be professionally treated prior to occupancy. The pest exterminator used a synthetic pyrethroid applied around each stump (concrete) as a barrier. Neighbours have told us that termites are active in the area, so we have chosen not to plant gardens adjacent to the house, instead having areas of river pebbles, paving and cypress pine (not attractive to termites) decking. (Editor)

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See page 82 for ordering details.

Where To Find Organics

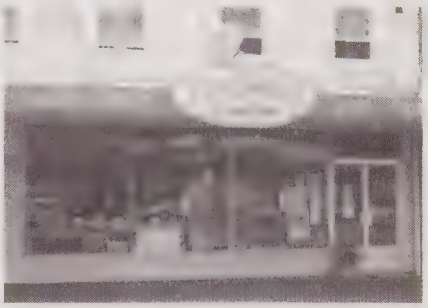
by Suni Miller, Avenel, Vic.

There is nothing more delicious than a fresh organic tomato or crunchy carrot. And taste aside, no one wants chemicals in their produce. But where to get hold of these luscious goodies? If you live in Melbourne or Sydney, you're probably inundated with options, but for those in outlying or rural areas, sourcing a good supply of organic vegies can be a challenge.

The first place to start is your local grocer or health food shop. Ask them if any of their current lines are organic, and if not, see if they'll order some in for you. Even better, canvas your mates and see if anyone else in the area is interested. If grocers know there's a guaranteed market, they'll be all the more willing to source some goods for you.

Local markets are a terrific place to access cheap, fresh, organic goods. Check out all those in your area, and if they are only held once a month or so, and you need your carrots weekly, take the name and number of the stallholder and see if you can buy regularly and directly from them. Many organic farms are happy to sell from the farm gate, and they may even be enticed to do a delivery run if, again, you can get some mates to order with you. Establishing a relationship with a primary producer is good for you and them: not only are you supporting small business and helping the environment by choosing organic primary production, but you can find out exactly how the fruit, veg, honey, eggs, or whatever, is grown, and can be sure you are getting exactly what you want. Of course, markets like the Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne are convenient one-stop shops for city folk and a great morning out. Website www.farmersmarkets.org.au might have options in your locale.

Believe it or not, quite a few major organic producers in the big smoke will deliver to rural and suburban areas.



The Organic Larder in Geelong, Vic.

There are stores in large country towns that offer this service, some using trains, others couriers. Bendigo Health Foods, for example, delivers to a 200-kilometre radius. There's nothing more handy than having your vegies delivered to your doorstep each Monday. You can even order them over the web and they'll be delivered a day later. You don't have to leave the house!

Word of mouth aside, how do you find out about these places? A good place to start is with the bodies that certify organic producers. Try the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia, ph: 08-8370-8455; Organic Federation of Australia, ph: 02-9299-8016; ORGAA, ph: 03-9737-9799; Tassie Organic Producers, ph: 03-6266-0330; or the Organic Herb Growers, ph: 02-6622-0100.

When it comes to guide books, we reckon we have the best one here at Grass Roots. Called the *Organic Guide to Australia*, it lists greengrocers, cafés and delivery services for each state, and includes handy details like delivery area radius, what foods are sold, whether allergies are catered for and the like. It's also a useful little number if you are thinking of travelling, as it can point you to a GR-friendly café or grocer in the area with delicious healthy, organic produce.

So get out there and start treating yourself to really tasty food. Go on!

Raise A House Cow

by Clare Colins, Bellingen, NSW.

If you have decided that a house cow would be a good idea for your family, but, like us, you've been unable to find a suitable one, why not raise one yourself from a calf? Raising your own house cow is a long-term commitment, but we believe it's well worthwhile if you're feeling settled where you are.

MANY ADVANTAGES

- You will know that she is healthy.
- You will know how old she really is.
- You will have a wider choice of breed.
- She will love and trust you if you treat her well.
- She will be a delight to milk.
- She will be with you for a long time and bear many calves.
- Your children will enjoy the company of a friendly, affectionate animal.

FEW DISADVANTAGES

- You will have to wait a little over two years for that fabulous milk, cream and butter.
- You will need to be available for morning and evening feeds for at least 12 weeks.

COSTS

Costs will vary widely from place to place and according to the state of the market. The following estimates are based on our own experiences.

- A week-old heifer calf, milking breed: $100 – $150.
- Her milk powder for at least eight weeks: $120 – $150.
- Calf pellets or calf grower ration: $60 – $100.
- Sundry items such as buckets, remedies, and later on AI costs: $100 – $150.
- Oaten hay or similar: ongoing.

This might at first seem like a fair amount of money, but a house cow (of indeterminate age) could cost between $400 and $600 and not necessarily have the nature you'd like.

If, like us, you decide to buy more than one calf (and it's a good idea as they're herd animals and prone to escape if bored), the costs can be spread out a bit. If you buy two heifers and keep only one as your house cow, the other, if you wish, you could sell in calf for between $400 and $600. Money back!

Janet, the smaller of our two calves, survived a crisis but picked up quickly.

WHERE TO PURCHASE

In rural areas calf sales are held once or twice a month and the animals range in age from a day old to six months or so. Alternatively, contact your local dairies and see if they have any 'spares'.

PREPARATION

Little calves need lots of attention for the first six weeks or so and it's best to be prepared. We speak from experience here.

Before you head off to market or the dairy do make sure you're ready for her (or them). You will need:

- A small, safe enclosure with shelter from sun, wind or rain.
- Electrolytes (available from your vet or produce store) to rehydrate after the stressful journey to and from market.
- Milk replacement powder (or colostrum if you're buying a calf less than one week old).
- Buckets (a nice bright colour) and scales to weigh the milk powder. This is important!

Additionally, we recommend you have on hand Scourban (in case they get the 'squits') and bloat remedy.

OUR GIRLS

Georgie Girl and Janet were bought together at the Oakey sales. They looked cute, tired and lonely. The trip home to Nanango took one-and-a-half hours. It was a very hot day and they were so exhausted they had to be lifted off the truck. They could barely stand on their own legs. They were both about one week old. Paula and I made them a comfy nest in the shade and, after a drink of electrolytes (given on a piece of cloth to suck), they picked up remarkably.

We fed the 'girls' twice daily on warm milk. All appeared to be going smoothly until a spell of really hot weather. Janet, the smaller, developed bloat after her feed. She literally blew up like a balloon and seemed quite distressed. Paula and I took turns massaging her poor swollen belly until the vet arrived. We didn't know about bloat so were not prepared. One visit from the vet and a couple of doses of green, minty smelling stuff (given by syringe) and she was better.

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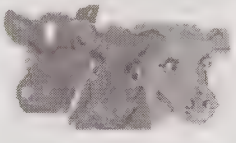

Donna & Hugh Anthony
131 Old Coach Way Yandina Q 4561
07 54467049
kyrhet@bigpond.com
http://minicattle.virtualave.net

Georgie (touch wood) has never had any problems at all, except that, being the bigger of the two calves, she is a faster eater and will snaffle Janet's feed too if someone is not on hand to stop her.

From experience, again, I would recommend that if you buy two calves (or more) pick ones the same age and size. Life will be a lot easier! Also, despite the fact that there are heaps of orphans, buy only as many as you can spare the time and energy for. Think of them as twins, triplets, quads!

After eight to ten weeks on milk replacement powder the calves can be introduced to calf pellets or similar. Start off with a small cupful and increase gradually over time. They like to eat these dry. Read the manufacturers' labels carefully as some animal feeds contain antibiotics or steroids (enhancers). Some contain neither. Make sure you get the feed you want for your animals.

At this stage the calves will also enjoy a nibble of hay. Make clean dry hay available to them along with fresh water. They will also need worming at this time. Keep their areas clean and they will stay healthy.

Kids love feeding poddies so there is no shortage of help when friends visit and this accustoms your future milkers to outside handling.

At four months old Janet and Georgie were a real joy to behold as they frolicked in the paddock. They were eating new green grass as it appeared as well as calf pellets and oaten hay. They are friendly and enjoy a cuddle. At each feed, morning and night, Paula pats them all over to get them used to human touch. We don't envisage any problems with them milking in the future.

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THE OPEN ROAD
Catching The Sunsets

by Julia LeMonde, Sunshine Plaza, Qld.

Krystal, Julia, Ken with Corey and Daniel in front of Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park – World Heritage Area.

Since our life of travel on the open road has ceased for now and I'm waiting for our fourth child to arrive, I have time to review our recent year around Australia. Parenting and teaching our children while travelling was an enriching experience. The trip was one of the highlights of this family's life, but hectic at times and somewhat removed from the idea that we were just taking a year off. There is so much to see and do on such a venture, not to mention that life is busy with children anyway. Despite this, we found wonderful ways to relax when we weren't home schooling or moving from one place to the next.

One of the first challenges was cooking outside, but I adapted well considering the limited options. What I would give for my two-burner gas cook-top now as I struggle to adapt to an electric stove in a rented house. Dampers made in a cast iron camp oven and pan pizzas cooked ever so slowly in a frying pan were wonderful. We had a three-way fridge in our van so could always stop and eat salads, make fresh sandwiches and enjoy cold drinks. We reserved takeaway food for special times, such as eating fish and chips on the beach at sunset on the Gulf of Carpentaria, or sampling a range of multicultural delights from Darwin's Mindil Beach Markets while watching the sun 'sink' into the Timor Sea.

After driving during a drought, and with long treks through the outback, living with dirt and looking and feeling dusty most of the time didn't bother any of us. Bush camping and water restrictions meant that hot water springs and cool crystal waterfalls did more than provide relief from the day's heat. At times we deliberately chose to stay out of the water. Giant stingers in the tropics were one cause for concern. The sign warning that in the event of a sting CPR was to be administered immediately, followed by a fast trip to the hospital, was enough for us. We took heed of crocodile warning signs too (no first-aid advice here as surviving an attack was pretty much not negotiable). We did learn that 'freshies' (freshwater crocs) weren't as bad as 'salties' (saltwater crocs), but we chose to keep away from both. Instead, we were content to spot them from the safety of a large river boat on the Daintree in Queensland, and from a steep bank in Kakadu National Park, NT.

All around the country we stargazed and bush-camped and visited some beautiful national parks. We had experiences with flies that we laugh about now, but their persistence and numbers had to be seen to be believed. Then we lived with mosquito and midge bites that made us forget about the flies. Through local advice we discovered that Vicks Vapour Rub numbed and soothed our itches in the tropics (after all manner of other medications failed to work). The threat of irritating biting insects, however, was put into perspective when a lively brown snake visited our campsite one morning. We sought ranger assistance on this one. When the park ranger is nervous you know there is something to be concerned about!

About halfway through our trip came the long, and at times truly

Our cosy campsite on the sand at Cape Keravdren, WA.

monotonous, drive to see Uluru. The 1900-kilometre detour from Tennant Creek and back was forgotten, however, the minute the rock hit the horizon, with the full force of its Aboriginal spiritual significance not lost on us. I couldn't take my eyes off it from the moment it came into view. Uluru dominates the entire area. Though the other landforms there are spectacular in their own right, Kata Tjuta (formerly the Olgas) and Mount Connor, the Rock took centre stage for us. We watched in silent awe as the setting sun cast shadows and reflected gorgeous colours on the Rock, with a full moon rising behind it. We had tea there and the children sketched pictures of it and nothing else in the world mattered as we gazed at the colours cast by the setting sun.

The country was awesome, the scenery breathtaking. I remember vividly the outback's brilliant blue sky against the ochre colours of the soil. We loved the magic of the long sunsets, the smoky skyline of an outback sky at dusk, and the huge flocks of galahs and cockatoos streaking across the horizon. The experience of watching the sun sinking in a blaze of colour into the Indian ocean in Broome, WA, was impossible to replicate in a photo . . . and we took many.

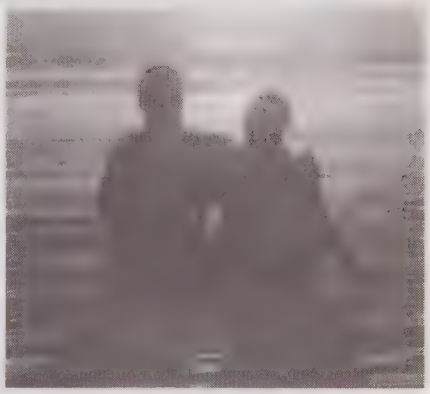
Another highlight of the trip was meeting other travellers. We met interesting and friendly German and Israeli tourists who shared the same awe of the scenery, the wildlife, the gorges and waterfalls. A harmonica and a guitar made for a great campfire night at a free camp spot, one of many such nights with fellow travellers. Our children linked up with other children wherever possible and we were pleasantly surprised at the number of families travelling around.

We met many Aborigines who were happy to educate us about their culture. We visited beautifully laid out cultural centres, Aboriginal rock art and sacred sites, and heard fascinating Aboriginal stories around a campfire in Gregory National Park, NT.

The end of the trip was bittersweet as we had no 'home' as such to come back to, having decided to start a new life in Queensland. Learning how to live in a house again was strange at first. I opened up some of our storage items and wondered what I ever used an iron for. It was fascinating walking on carpet for the first time in a year (apart from a guided tour of someone's deluxe mobile bus once) and nice to leave toiletries in the bathroom again. For the first few weeks we all went about routinely filling up our plastic drink bottles before rediscovering the joy of drinking from glass.

The hardest thing about our trip has been adjusting to mainstream life on the coast while we decide what to do next. The contrast in values after such a trip has left me with culture shock. Learning how to make a living here seems to be at the expense of learning how to make a life.

Sunsets, night skies, campfires and down-to-earth people are printed indelibly on my mind and, after listening to the children, I know the same pictures are in their minds too. We have diaries, photos and videos of the trip, however, this travelling bug has only just begun for all of us. I know that making catching the sunset the only deadline in my day for a while was one of the best things I've ever done.



Mother and daughter enjoying sunset at Cable Beach, Broome, WA.

BUSH DAMPER

3 cups SR flour
1 – 2 tbsp salt
mixed herbs
milk
water

Mix flour, salt and herbs with half milk, half water until dough is the required consistency and cook in a camp oven covered with hot coals.

We were happy to hear recently from Julia about the birth of Savannah, a 4.5-kilogram, beautiful, healthy baby girl. Congratulations!

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Heritage Sheep Breeds

THE HAMPSHIRE DOWN

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Our heritage series focuses on another meat breed this issue, the Hampshire Down. It is a distinctive looking sheep, fast growing, robust and very hardy. Not familiar with it? That's because the Hampshire has only ever been a minor breed in Australia and consequently hasn't received the recognition it deserves. Hampshire Downs have had a keen following in England for over 150 years and are the third most popular terminal sire in both the US and Canada. It is a breed, too, that can boast representation in every continent of the world.

The Hampshire Down originated in the early decades of the 19th century from crosses of local races of Wiltshire and Berkshire sheep that were in turn infused with Southdown. The resultant type was standardised in the 1840s and became numerous in southern England, with as many as 20,000 passing hands at any one of the regular sheep fairs held in large villages in the region.

The breed proved invaluable to farmers. Ewes could be mated early in the season, like the Dorset Horn discussed last issue, and ewes put to Southdown rams produced early lambs that were much sought in London markets. The Hampshire Down was first and foremost a money making sheep.

Representatives of the breed appeared at shows in Tasmania around the time of Federation, but sheep believed to be Hampshire Downs had been in the country since the 1860s. Many prominent Tasmanian sheep breeders took on small Hampshire Down flocks in the latter years of the 19th century; however, up against the stiff competition offered by crossing breeds like Shropshire, Southdown and Dorset Horn, they kept their followers, but failed to find a niche that would sweep them to popularity.

Hampshire Downs are well-framed, muscular sheep with distinctive dark coloured points.

Hampshires, as they're more commonly known, are found largely in Tasmania, with lesser numbers in Victoria, SA and NSW. There are currently 24 registered studs, four of which are maintained by schools. While the breed's numerical status isn't as worrying as that of Shropshires, Dorset Downs or Lincolns, new breeders are needed and welcomed.

BREED PROFILE

A medium to large sheep, Hampshires display many characteristics associated with the Downs breeds. For example, face, ears and legs are coloured and fleece is dense, reasonably fine and quite springy. Hampshires have rich brown, almost black, points and the poll and forehead are covered with white wool, but eyes are unobscured and breeders select away from heavy covering on the cheeks.

The breed has a deep symmetrical body, well-sprung ribs, flat loins, wide rump and heavily developed breast and legs of mutton. The neck is strong, muscular and well placed on gently sloping shoulders. English books show the Hampshire as a short, stocky sheep. Many of the photos are out of date as the breed has changed over the last few decades. Our Australian stock have been infused with New Zealand genetics and it's likely the improved size, length and shoulder conformation derived from this.

Temperament

Hampshires are generally described as

docile, and the involvement of numerous schools in stud breeding is evidence of the breed's easy handling qualities. They are also known for being acquiescent with fencing, provided feed and water needs are met.

Environment

The adaptability of this breed is borne out by their worldwide dispersion; their hardy constitution enables them to be kept under a range of conditions. Without doubt, though, if you want multiple births and fast growth, you need to be able to feed and finish stock well, so accessibility to good quality pasture would be a must. It's probably no accident that the majority of Hampshires are found in fertile Tasmania. *Grass Roots* readers living in low rainfall areas and desiring a small flock could successfully manage the breed, although instances of multiple births may be lower and growth of lambs slower.

Fibre Character

This is a secondary consideration as lamb production is the prime focus. Fleece is white, around 26 micron and shortish at 90-millimetre staple length.

Carcass Production

Hampshires are chiefly used as terminal sires in prime lamb production; the coloured points on offspring are no barrier to obtaining premium prices. The rams are used over first cross ewes and the fast maturing lambs are very deceptive, weighing considerably more than appearances indicate. This applies to all Hampshire and Hampshire cross lambs.

The breed is similar to several other Downs sheep; all grow rapidly with a minimum of fat. They also produce a carcass with excellent flavour. In late 2002 in a blind tasting of lamb cuts in a Carlton North (Vic) restaurant, Hampshire lamb received the highest praise for flavour against eight other breeds or crossbreds.

The fast growing lambs allow breeders to capitalise on early markets, but if young are not sold as suckers, they can be finished on summer crops without running to fat, a feature that should appeal to smallholders. The latter can keep a few lambs on for the freezer and dispatch them when it suits, rather than having to do them all at once or else consume fatty cuts.

Breeding

Breeding Hampshires is all good news. The rams are noted for high fertility and, being fast growing, can serve ewes at seven or eight months of age. Ewes have strong maternal instincts and abundant milk and generally have trouble-free lambing. Where good pasture is available ewes can be put on a rising plane of nutrition prior to joining to maximise the chances of twins; in such circumstances a lambing percentage of 150 – 165 is not uncommon. Like the Dorset breeds, Hampshires will procreate out of season and can be joined three times in two years, provided feed is available to support them. Lambs are robust and grow quickly, especially the crossbreds. The superior characteristics of the carcass appear to be very dominant and are transmitted to all progeny.

Special Features

Hampshires could well be marketed as the ideal smallholder sheep. They're eye-catching, easy to handle and robust, they display good resistance to parasites and disease and they adapt to both high and low rainfall conditions. For example, there are numerous studs in high rainfall Tasmania, but also several on the SA border and near Horsham in Victoria, which are low rainfall areas. The ewes last well so you can anticipate a long breeding life and, as they're not seasonal breeders, they will take the ram at any time of the year. This particularly suits dryland farmers as they can plan lambing for when feed is good. The fast growing lambs can be ready for sale just before the paddocks dry off. The size and muscling on lambs easily meet current market requirements.

Association Viewpoint

The Australian Hampshire Down Breeders' Association promotes their breed as being hardy, with high fertility, a high lamb survival rate and a heavy, quality carcass. They also call attention to the fact Lambplan figures have shown that the eye muscle of Hampshires is by far the best, and more eye muscle means more meat.

For more information, contact: Secretary, Jackie Brown, Bridgewater High School Farm, PO Box 37, Bridgewater, Tas 7030. GR readers should also check our Breeder Listing on page 81 for contacts.

ECO-SMART HOUSE

The Queensland Environmental Protection Agency has produced a free consumer guide with helpful advice on building, buying or renovating a home so you can save money, help the environment and still have a comfortable home. There is also a technical manual available online or for purchase.

For the consumer guide contact 1300-130-606 (in Qld), or 07-3858-6633. For the technical manual see www.yourhome.gov.au

ECOSELECT TIMBER

A new labelling system has been introduced to help consumers choose products made from sustainably harvested local timbers. Look for the ecoSelect label at major stores such as Mitre 10, Forty Winks, Bedshed and Bunnings.

For more information visit the website: www.ecoselect.com.au

Supa Soft Alpaca Carding Services

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Jenny & Aldis Stucers

03-5996-7085

www.supasoft.com.au

HERITAGE SHEEP AUSTRALIA

"Saving the breeds that were the foundation of our sheep and wool industry"

Individual membership $25, family $40, junior $15.

Send to Heritage Sheep Australia, RASV Limited, Royal Showgrounds Epson Rd, Ascot Vale 3032

Livestock Health and Management

Information You Need but Haven't Known Where to Ask

If you have queries on any type of livestock send them in and we'll get our panel of experts to research the problem for you. Post them to Livestock Advice Page, Grass Roots, PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

POULTRY AND SNAILS

We have always collected snails in the garden and given them to the chooks. Friends visiting recently were horrified and said we were wrong and that only ducks should be given snails. Is there any truth in this comment?

Elizabeth Carter,
MACKSVILLE 2447.

The comment relates to the fact that snails, slugs, grasshoppers and even earthworms are vectors in the life cycle of tapeworms and possibly the protozoa that cause blackhead, a serious disease for turkeys, pheasants and peafowl. Fowls can occasionally be affected by blackhead too. With regard to tapeworm, many farm fowls ingest all the vectors named with no discernible problems. Risky times are during periods of warm weather and high rainfall, the warmth and wet conditions being perfect for speedy multiplication of tapeworms and, if the species involved is one that can have disastrous results, fowls with heavy burdens may lose weight quickly and appear depressed and ill or die. So, if you are in an area where you have a lot of summer rain that results in muddy ground and humid conditions, it would be best to give the hens a different treat, chopped apple for example. The problem doesn't seem to occur in a dry warm climate. Ducks can ingest all the vectors safely because they are unaffected by the blackhead protozoa and show no disease symptoms to most tapeworm species.

OMEGA 3 EGGS

What gives with the Omega 3 eggs advertised, are they worth the money or is it a fad of the moment?

Ann Fitzpatrick,
HURSTBRIDGE 3099.

You're not the only GR reader who has questioned the health value of eggs marketed as being specially enriched. In the case of those high in Omega 3 fats, the hens that have produced them have been fed a diet supplemented with ingredients which carry rich sources of Omega 3 fats. These are believed to have protective properties against both cancer and cardiovascular disease. The average Australian diet is very low in Omega 3 fats. The enriching concept was jointly developed by the Agriculture Business Research Institute and Professor David Farrell, an animal nutritionist at UNE. Currently, there are several brands on the market high in Omega 3 fats, but 'NewStart' are the eggs originating from the ABRI and Dr Farrell's collaboration and are under licence to a company in NSW. Regular egg samples are checked to ensure they contain the nutrients shoppers pay a premium for. Could you produce your own Omega 3 eggs? Possibly, if you were prepared to search poultry nutrition data for details of sources of the different Omega 3 fats – LNA (associated with flax oil), EPA and DHA – and the amounts required to be given to laying hens.

LEGLESS LIZARD

Our terrier recently brought in what we thought was a dead snake, but on looking more closely it appeared to have funny small scaly flaps at the base of the tail. It looked like a brown snake and obviously had been caught by the dog in the garden. Any thoughts?

Ann Bryant,
MYRTLEFORD 3736.

It is likely that you saw a legless lizard as these have scaly appendages similar to those you described. There are around 10 species in Victoria, your state, and it's not uncommon for them to be mistaken for snakes. It's a rare person who takes time to look closely for distinguishing features when they see what looks like a snake, but there are differences aside from the rudimentary hind legs. A legless lizard will have small ear openings behind the eyes, a pointed, not forked, tongue and will move abruptly in a jumpy manner instead of smoothly slithering. As a member of the lizard family, they are able also to discard portions of their tail to evade danger. They are active in the garden, devouring grasshoppers, beetles, flies, ants and even spiders. It goes without saying they are protected wildlife.

Poultry Breeders

We're looking for purebred breeders of the different poultry species to list in our next edition of the *Poultry Breeders Directory.*

Send a stamped SAE for an entry form to: Poultry Directory, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661.

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES FOR ANIMALS

$98 Pet Power Pack First Aid Kit
$138 with flea, worming & heartworm prevention, plus book.
$40 only for flea, worming and heartworm energy.

Please contact Jackie Fitzgerald for other products available.

Jackie Fitzgerald: Homoeopath, Herbologist, Reiki Master.
Shop 4, 658 Pittwater Rd, Brookvale, NSW 2100, Australia.
Ph: 02-8902-3010 Fax: 02-9939-0404 Mobile: 0425-221-646

ECO NEWS

GREEN FLUORESCENTS

New standards are being introduced in all Australian states to increase the energy efficiency of fluorescent lights. The new standards will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs for consumers. Nationwide, the greenhouse gas savings will amount to 1,123,000 tonnes over the next seven years. Savings on energy bills to consumers over the same time are expected to amount to $163 million. The standards require more efficient fluorescent light ballasts to replace the old-style ferromagnetic ballasts.

COOLING GLOBAL WARMING

The Australian Greenhouse Office has produced a 'Cool Communities' kit consisting of a book and information leaflets aimed at helping Australians understand the issues associated with climate change and how we can all make small changes to our lifestyles that will have positive benefits for the environment. There is advice about appliances, home heating and cooling, water heating, cooking and transport, with many hints for saving money as well as reducing greenhouse gases. As part of the Cool Communities project 22 communities Australia-wide have committed to finding innovative ways to reduce greenhouse emissions.

For more information or to obtain a kit contact the Australian Greenhouse Office on 1300-130-606, or look up the website: www.greenhouse.gov.au

ANT INVASION

The Tiwi Islands off northern Australia have been invaded by nine exotic ant species. The pests are thought to have reached the islands via Darwin in pot plants and building materials. Some of the introduced ants form huge colonies, displacing native fauna, disrupting the ecology and having a detrimental effect on agriculture. Some houses have been completely surrounded by stinging ginger ants to the extent that people are unable to go outside. Aboriginal authorities and the CSIRO are developing a proposal for control of pest ants on Aboriginal land throughout northern Australia.

A burrowing bettong juvenile. Photo courtesy of CSIRO.

THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION

Four species of native fauna extinct on mainland Australia – the western barred bandicoot, burrowing bettong, banded hare wallaby and rufous hare wallaby – have remnant wild populations on islands in Shark Bay, WA. A recovery plan for the survival of the four species has recently been instigated. Strategies include control of introduced predators and captive breeding and recovery programs in three separate locations. Good communication and exchange of knowledge between all stakeholders is seen as a key element towards maximising the likelihood of long-term survival for the four species.

There are also ambitious plans underway for the reintroduction of bettongs to Fuare Island, where feral cats have been eliminated, and hare wallabies to the Peron Peninsula. At the latter site there is a major program planned to eliminate feral cats and foxes from over 1000 square kilometres prior to the release of the hare wallabies.

CLIMATE CHANGE

With average temperatures predicted to rise by between one and six degrees Celsius by the year 2070 and rainfall to decline in many areas, CSIRO researchers predict increased drought, more bushfires, more soil erosion, and also more frequent floods and tropical cyclones for some locations. All these phenomena are expected to place greater stress on a range of ecosystems – especially vulnerable will be coral reefs, alpine regions, the south-west of WA, rainforests and rivers – and to have significant negative impact on Australia's water resources. There will be less runoff to water storages, increased salinity and more frequent algal blooms. All these impacts will in turn have a detrimental affect on biodiversity. In particular, animals restricted to cool upland areas will have an ever diminishing habitat as temperatures increase. One ecologist says that over 80 species are vulnerable to extinction if temperatures change more than two degrees.

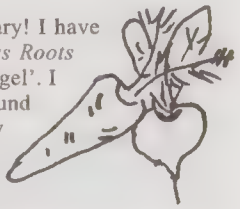
On the good news front is a report that over the last four years there has been no global increase in the greenhouse gas methane. Methane is released into the atmosphere from agriculture, mining, use of fossil fuels, landfill and natural wetlands. The static state of atmospheric methane compares with a rise of 15 percent over the preceding 20 years.

SUSTAINABLE RANGELANDS

A five-year project involving 40,000 hectares of rangeland in the Northern Territory is examining ways of increasing profits for pastoralists without damaging the environment. One facet of the research involves fitting cattle with collars containing a global positioning system. A management strategy being considered is changing paddock size and location of water points to induce more even grazing – uneven grazing reduces production and increases land degradation. On the other hand, uneven grazing is beneficial to biodiversity, as more lightly grazed areas provide a wildlife haven and previous studies have shown that some flora and fauna species either decline or disappear when grazing pressure increases. The current project is examining ways of avoiding this outcome and ensuring that new grazing strategies do not result in biodiversity loss. Information gathered will underpin future development in the Northern Territory's rangelands and help ensure a sustainable beef industry.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,



Congratulations on your 30th anniversary! I have been sent your July 2003 edition of *Grass Roots* by my friend Sandy Kelly, the 'outback angel'. I have a strong interest in gardening and found your publication of great interest. I too try to be as green as possible and recycle things and am totally chemical free when growing vegies etc.

Sandy and I have been corresponding as penpals since we were 12 years old and that's nearly 50 years! I answered a request in a girl's magazine for penpals all that time ago and was given two names, only one of those stood the test of time and of course that was Sandy. We have shared all the emotions of those early years – marriage, children, grandchildren etc – through writing to each other and exchanging photographs and letters. I felt that we were like sisters, and I think Sandy felt that way too. She is the most amazing person you could ever wish to meet and so compassionate.

For many years Sandy had been promising to come to England to visit and it was a race to see who would make the trip to see the other, but back in 1989 she was the first to make the trip and visited my husband and me in our home at Plumpton Green, Sussex, England. I was totally taken aback with Sandy's lovely nature and we got on like a house on fire. She even helped me dig my vegetable patch – you can't keep a good girl down! We did all the usual tourist trips and all too soon she had to return to Aussie. I promised that one day my husband Peter and I would make the trip to see your country. This we were able to do in May 1998.

First we stayed with some friends in Wingham, NSW, who had emigrated way back in about 1968 and who took us all over the Manning Valley area. But the final treat was when we met Sandy at Karumba after a trip in a 15-seat plane. In the UK travelling internally is not a regular thing as the country is so small and we use the roads and rail all the time, so this was a good experience for us. Sandy took us through the outback where we experienced the aftermath of the floods, which rendered the roads almost impassible, but she got us through in her 4WD. Our first overnight stop was in Burketown where we slept in a tin church after chasing the cane toads out! Sandy was combining her work of visiting her clients with showing us your country. We met one of Sandy's Aboriginal clients and also an elderly man who lived in a dilapidated caravan. We stayed in Lawn Hill National Park for three nights and it is the most wonderful place to be, to see the stars which seem to be so close you could almost touch them and we could see their reflection in the river. This we found just amazing.

We saw and experienced so much that the ordinary tourist just doesn't see, that we would love to come and visit again. I would like to say that we received such a kindly welcome from everyone that we met, wherever it was.

Dawn Wells,
20 Hillcrest Rd, Newhaven,
EAST SUSSEX BN9 9EE, ENGLAND.

Dear Grass Roots People,

I was surprised to see my last year's letter re **MOVING TO TASSIE** in print! It generated some emails, letters and phone calls, and one couple, Margaret and Robert Blair, are at present in Tasmania house-hunting, so we've been able to meet them – a friendship made through GR.

We're still loving it down here: the sea, the changeable climate and the friendly people. However, this past eight months we have watched house prices rise dramatically and just about everything standing (and some that should not be standing) be quickly sold. Yes, there is property still around, but not a lot and prices are rising still, so anyone who is coming should get down here quickly.

The garden has been a steep learning curve. I hope I've conquered the oxalis in the vegie patch by lifting each bulb in the summer and disposing of bags of them, but I wait to see things just pop out of the ground here – the soil is very fertile. Alan fixed up an outside cable, so now I can listen to talking books on the cassette recorder while I weed.

I should say the Tasmanian library system is marvellous. Every local library is part of the State Library, the catalogue is on the Net, and you can place a hold on items, which are delivered to your local library – all free.

We had thought we'd have a quieter life. Not so, but we bring it on ourselves. Alan is doing a diploma in fine art at the Burnie TAFE, I go one day a week to Creative Paper where I volunteer and 'play' with the handmade paper, we sing with the Wynyard Chorale and are helping out with the big Musical Hall, which Wynyard Rotary put on each year. Then there's the church and the historical society – not many evenings in at present to enjoy our wood fire.

Hilary & Alan Wright,
73 Old Bass Hwy, WYNYARD 7325.

Dear GR,

I am a 61-year-old reasonably fit woman who finds the winters in South Australia hard to take. For three months of the year I would like to move to Queensland, Broome or Darwin. I am honest, reliable and very fond of animals. I have a gentle natured female Kelpie who is other animal and bird friendly. My hobbies are stained glass, gardening and reading. I like the bush and country and have an interest in most things alternative. Is there anyone who needs someone to caretake their property for the months of June – August inclusive, or who needs help with something in exchange for accommodation?

Moia Lester,
65 Gulf Pde, MASLIN BEACH 5170.

Dear GR,

TERMITE PROBLEMS: Hey, hey, hold the chlorpyrifos! It is a nerve poison and if it is not available for houses that is because it is not suitable, as stated! A good pest controller's method is to put arsenic trioxide on tasty wooden stakes into the ground, which the termites eat and take back to the nest. But you never know where it ends up long term do you? And it's not for amateurs.

However, my tame environmentally friendly pest controller says to put your last year's telephone directories a distance from your house at the end of a normal garden and that'll keep the termites happy till the next books come. If they are already in the house, cut off their route between the house and the nest mechanically – the termites die if they can't go home to mum.

Do you really want your kids around something 'toxic to dogs, fish, pets, snakes'? Add us to that list. Physical barriers like Termimesh are safest!

Andrea,
MALVERN 3145.

Dear GR Readers,

My husband and I will be relocating to a lovely property **NEAR CANN RIVER** in north-east Victoria later this year. We would appreciate information and local contacts for both growing organic beef and control of bracken and blackberries. We are particularly interested in anyone who has successfully trialled different breeds of goats on blackberries.

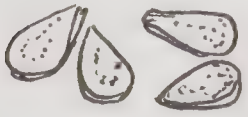
Lisa Manser,
PO Box 1313, KUNUNURRA 6743

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

Thanks for 30 years of good information. Can anyone help me locate **CRANBERRY SEEDS** and **SPAGHETTI VEGETABLE SEEDS?** My local greengrocer can't even buy the fruit for me to use the seeds from. Can swap seed or send money for some seeds. I'm also interested in growing different varieties of nuts, but not sure if the climate in Gippsland (Victoria) is appropriate.

Megan Oates,
8 Bittner St, CARRAJUNG 3844.
Email: meganmille@optusnet.com.au



One of our advertisers, New Gippsland Seeds, has the seeds you want and I think our other advertisers Phoenix Seeds, Eden Seeds and also possibly The Diggers Club would also have them.

Dear GR,

I'm trying to get some **TASMANIAN BLUE GUM** seeds and seeds of the more interesting, unusual and decorative eucalypts from WA. Does anyone know of a source for these? Or if they are kind enough to send some I will reimburse them for the postage costs. I don't need many of each, so a normal envelope would easily contain them. My land is frost free, sandy to loamy soil (acid), subtropical climate.

SALINITY of our rivers and once prime land is being aggressively confronted by many people with good results. The ABC TV programs 'Catalyst' and 'Landline' tell many success stories. One story of the Murray Darling River Basin describes the capture and harvest of the saline river water and its discharge into a lake system where the sun evaporates the pure water into clouds and leaves the various salts behind. One salt is sodium chloride, which is used on our food and of which we import thousands of tonnes each year from Thailand and the UK. The liquid left over after table salt is called bittern, from which is extracted magnesium sulphate (Epsom salt) and magnesium chloride. These are used as fertilisers and stabilisers for dirt road compaction and in mudbrick building projects. Millions of tonnes are available from just the Murray River.

Turning an apparent negative into a positive is quite an achievement by Sunsalt and Duncan Thompson and should be copied around Australia in a nationwide effort to improve our country and reduce imports.

HOUSESITTERS is a wonderful way to make money by saving money. Freecall 1800-502-002 to put your name on the list. You must have good valid references (no phonies) and a track record of being a reliable responsible person. You can gradually travel around Australia and the world very inexpensively. Happy days. Rent your own home for income. But no wild parties and keep the place clean. Nonsmokers get the best house, liars and dags don't get good references. Always be up front and super clean and tidy.

Great photo on cover of GR 158, nice earthy colour of the mud used in the **TYRE HOUSE** and interesting article to encourage the use of a large number of old tyres, which are a bit of a pest to dispose of. Readers should be aware that each old tyre costs at least $3 to dispose of and you can talk with the tyre shop to get this $3 per tyre, which will reduce your building costs. Depending on tyre size used, this roughly equates to $30 per square metre of wall area. Larger tyres cost more to dispose of, so do your sums. In this article no evidence is seen of a damp course. I have always used an aluminium and bitumen composite material to prevent any moisture migration, capillary action or rising damp at the slab and bottom row of tyres interface, just as cheap insurance. There are many suitable products on the market. Also, it was not clear from the photos what method was used at the 90° corners of the external walls concerning tyre overlap as just filling with mud can lead to cracking in the future.

Roberino,
PO Box 359, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.

Dear GRs,

RESORCINOL, suggested as an ingredient in fly papers, is toxic by inhalation. It is particularly dangerous to asthmatics and allergy sufferers. Bicarb in the baking soda recipe is bicarbonate of soda. It contains sodium and is the chemical used in most commercial baking powders, along with tartaric acid or citric acid and phosphate compounds. Chlorine from swimming pools and vehicle exhausts, particularly diesel, is beginning to affect the ozone layer.

Australian suburbs could certainly produce all the fruit, vegetables, nuts and legumes required to support most of the population. This would greatly reduce the amount of land required for agriculture. Revegetation of the remainder would improve air quality, reduce salinity and secure a future for plant and animal species, including humans. I suspect the land saved would simply be seen as space to be filled with more people. I recently heard a comment from an economist that it would be better to replace agricultural land with cities as they use much less water and generate more wealth. He did not mention the pollution or suggest what we could eat. This demonstrated to me just how divorced the average Australian has become from the source of our real needs. Most people seem to think food, water and clean air are optional and environmentally expensive luxury items are essential.

Judith M Brass,
15 Patricia St, KARALEE, IPSWICH 4306.

Dear Grass Roots,

I enclose a photo of the keyhole garden I created, having been inspired by an article in GR 155. The whole area was previously covered with dense shrubbery, which became overgrown and hard to maintain as it was infested with couch grass. Cleaning it all out was very hard work, but I am pleased with the result. The centre is filled with pine bark and my garden is now very easy to maintain. Thanks for a great magazine.

Gunta Hicks,
46 Cumberland Ave, CUMBERLAND PARK 5041.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR & Readers,

We have only been getting GR this year; wish we could have it more often as I love reading it. Already I have seen my third cousin, Sally Bodinnar, on your cover! We have started a chook dome and mandala garden, as per Linda Woodrow's book. It is such fun and one day, when hopefully it is rolling along really well, I will write about it. We have a few questions about gardening in a subalpine climate. We have frosts down to -7° C and hot summers. The big plus is we have water, via a river.

I am hoping that some of you have more experience than us and we can ask you for advice. I have had little success on the Internet so far. I would love to hear from people who are **GARDENING IN SEVERE FROSTS**.

Also, I wonder if anyone would know where we could purchase an old hand-operated chaff cutter. Hoping for sage advice, thanks.

Pam Bryant & Allan Jack,
RMB 3485, MANSFIELD 3722.
Ph: 03-5776-9676.
Email: pambryant@bigpond.com

Dear Grass Roots,

In reply to Wendy who asked for advice about her **UPSET STOMACH**: It is almost impossible to tell you the cause in the pages of a magazine as there could be many reasons for this. Please find a good naturopath or homoeopath who will have a different approach from that of the average doctor.

I can, however, speak from my own experience with a similar problem. Like you, I could always eat anything, but as I grew older I had weeks of bloating, flatulence and discomfort. It eventually wouldn't go away and a naturopath diagnosed severe candida. A restricted diet (no dairy foods, sugars, fats, dried fruit) and medication, which included digestive enzymes, took nearly nine months to clear the problem.

It still didn't really eliminate the cause of the problem, as it returned now and then, though not as severely. Last year I started visiting a homoeopath and learnt I was very deficient in zinc. The test for this is quick, cheap and simple – some pharmacies will now do it, it is such a common deficiency. This is also associated with low stomach acid, which is fairly common in people over 40. So, for me, a combination of zinc and hydrochloric acid, plus some other missing minerals (molybdenum especially) has turned the balance.

Most of this was discovered by having a hair analysis, an expensive procedure at $120, but it takes out all the guesswork when it comes to mineral deficiencies.

Please don't see this as advice to start taking these products – you need to have your own individual consultation. I recommend reading a small book called *Nutritional Medicine: Fact and Fiction*, by Dr Igor Tabrizian, NRS Publishing, PO Box 2068, Dogswamp LPO, Yokine, WA 6060. Dr Tabrizian has a long waiting list of patients and continually tries to educate the medical establishment about nutritional medicine.

Julie Woodman,
11 Urch Rd, ROLEYSTONE 6111.
Email: julwood@iprimus.com.au

Dear GRs,

Jewelstar: I live in the Wimmera Mallee these days and I will never get used to the **SEVERE FROSTS**. Talk to your local elderly gardeners as every area is different. These gardeners can help you find what is best for your area and most have strains of plants far from the genetics of the conventional world and less prone to the frosts. I found that, once I had a few plants, beginning a barter system of plants amongst other people was quite beneficial.

YG: I also have **LUMPS ON THE BREASTS**. I found that soaking one side of any form of light wadding with Swedish Bitters and placing it inside the bra against my breasts was quite helpful. However, it was discovered that my bras were in fact exacerbating the ailment, so these have been banned and the problem is greatly reduced. Another good remedy is sheep's wool grease just smeared over your nipples generously. Both products can be obtained from a health food shop. Let me know if you have any trouble finding them. It is well to note that wire bras have been classified as causing female breast problems, even cancer. It's worth thinking about if you feel the need to wear these items. Crop tops are a good alternative.

You could also try a **MEDITATION** I have practised for some years now for pain control. Lie or sit in a quiet relaxed atmosphere; close your eyes and concentrate on your toes. Visualise all the pain seeping out through the toes. Slowly, very slowly, work up your body one piece at a time. You may find at one point your legs and feet fall as if limp. Do not be concerned as this is relaxing your body into a peaceful state. You may even drift off into a peaceful sleep; again, do not be concerned for the meditation is working where it's best needed. You can set up a space in a room for doing this. Fire and water can help to set the mood. This method can be applied to any form of injury or pain and it's benefits are only limited to what you put into it.

H Jones and Caroline Williams: I have some very, very old recipe books you might interested in getting recipes from. Feel free to write to me.

Now for a request: Does anyone have the recipe for the **HAIR CONDITIONER MADE FROM STINGING NETTLE**? It is only a very basic recipe. I put my own copy away somewhere until my nettles grew to a good size and now it has gone missing. My hair at this point is in real need of a good tonic and cutting it is just not an option.

As you fellow readers can see, I delve into quite a few things from craft to animal rescue, bushwalking to woodwork, sewing to art, divining to gardening, camping to genealogy, child care to travel, writing letters and poems of experiences to sitting beside a fire, iris farming to restoration, and on it goes. My hands and mind are never idle. However, for the most part, conversations outside the barter system are few and far between. I would love to hear from anyone who can relate to anything I've mentioned, or maybe something I haven't. Good fortune and harmony to all. My heart goes to those who feel sadness, kind wishes to the children and our elderly, and again, thank you to the GR gang. You give us alternatives a way in which to keep in contact with each other.

Julie Todd,
10 Prince St, STAWELL 3380.

Dear Megg & Co,

I realise I'm a bit late with **CONGRATULATIONS** on the 30th issue, but congratulations to all on a magnificent job over the years. I remember your early years in Shepparton and Mooroopna and visiting your farm and Megg baking bread, and David developing black and white photos in his home darkroom. I guess we have all gone our different paths since then, but I still love reading each new GR with its input from readers all over Australia and the world. At times I've been a contributor myself, and will continue to do so. It's great learning new things from your pages and trying recipes. Over the years I've tried bread making, jam making, soap making, distilling perfume, tie-dyeing, spinning, gardening, silkworms, and I'll continue to experiment with new ideas. Good luck to all and look forward to reading for another 30 years.

Pam Davey,
PO Box 333, COOKTOWN 4871.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Readers,

Can anyone help me with a recipe for a **SOAP MADE FROM GOATS' MILK** please? I have seen this type of soap in gift shops, but it has no listed ingredients on the wrap. I think it might have been a homemade soap as it was wrapped in cellophane and only came in white.

If you wish to give a **WAX FINISH LOOK** to unpainted plaster of Paris ornaments, soak them overnight, completely covered by linseed oil. Next day, leave to drain and dry, making sure no dust gathers on them. When dry, buff with a soft cloth.

I've never had any luck getting **SOAPWORT LEAVES TO LATHER**, but I do recall reading the way to use the leaves as a soap is to gather a handful and put them in a small saucepan with enough water to cover and boil for a few minutes. You then use the cool, strained water to wash the hands with.

Robyn Leah,
61 Eighth St, WESTON 2326.

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

Hi, I love the magazine and have been an avid reader since I found my mother's stash of back issues while visiting one summer about seven years ago. I am a 30-year-old mother of four, ages 10 to 18 months. I have two dogs, a vegie patch and would much rather be doing my numerous craft (all half-finished) projects than my housework.

The kids and I are looking at relocating to the **MANSFIELD AREA** some time in the next 18 months and would dearly like to get to know a few people (through letters, phone calls) before we go, to make it easier on the kids (and myself). We are a quiet, friendly, alternative-minded mob, not particularly organised, but we muddle through. I would love for anyone from the area with similar outlooks to contact us, or even anyone else just looking for a penpal friend.

Meaghan Stirland,
8 Pinot Cres, COROWA 2646.

Dear Grass Roots,

I've been rereading my fairly large collection of GRs lately, and somewhere saw someone looking for a recipe for **QUASSIA SPRAY** to repel possums and such from the garden. I found the recipe in *The Essential It's So Natural* by Alan Hayes. To make quassia spray you need 30 grams quassia chips, 4 cups (1 litre) water, 20 grams soft soap*. Bring the quassia chips and water to the boil, then simmer for 30 minutes, adjusting the water if necessary. Remove from heat, strain and mix in the soft soap until completely dissolved. Dilute one part mixture with three parts water and use as required. *Note: soft soap (or green soap) is made using potassium carbonate instead of caustic soda. If your chemist doesn't have it in stock, they can order it in for you.

Heather Britten,
'Burleigh', DINGO 4702.

The Editor,

Australia was **DESIGNED TO BURN**. The houses that usually burn in a bushfire are the unoccupied ones, after the fire front has passed. We are of the opinion that more than 50 percent of the houses lost in the Canberra fire would have been saved if shelters and 4500-litre tanks went with the homes.

The rural fire brigades cannot have enough units to protect each house. The town's water supply cannot be relied upon in a bushfire, thus the need for a tank.

The system is to retreat to the shelter until the front has passed (a few minutes), then emerge and cope with the buildings that have started to burn.

Our shelter has been with us for 14 years and has seen two bushfires. It is a cement dome 2.13 metres high and 4.26 metres wide with a 686-millimetre hatch. When a compressed air cylinder is used it can drop the internal temperature down to 10° C. If a home has these two pieces of fire control, it might get a discount on insurance. The cost was under $1000 DIY.

When a 200-litre steel drum (water filled) is kept in the shelter a constant temperature is maintained winter and summer. This structure has no built-in floor and the earth floor allows condensation to occur on the walls, also lowering the temperature.

N Carr,
A & NZ Society of Ecologists, DARKES FOREST 2508.

Hi All,

I'm writing with an apology. In early 2002 I wrote in asking for penpals and hints on how to live more self-sufficiently. Because I had some difficulties, I was really naughty, and I wasn't able to write back to everyone. So sorry and thank you, especially to all the people who sent me seeds. My letter box is empty and I'm in need of like-minded souls. I'm now single and 24, my son is four and we are still stuck in the wilds of suburbia and still feeling our way in this big bad world, so if anyone has any hints or just wants to drop me a line, I'll really try not to be naughty this time.

Sarah Coull,
21 Pretoria Rd, SEVEN HILLS 2147.

Dear Grass Roots,

Some 34 years ago, on the west coast of the south island of New Zealand, my next next door neighbour and I, having an **ABUNDANCE OF CUCUMBER**, made a relish. The only ingredients I can remember are cucumber, pineapple and onion. I have a good crop of cucumbers in my garden now and have lost contact with the neighbour. I wondered if any readers could help me out. I know it will be too late for this year's crop, but will cherish a recipe for the future ones.

Faye Soper,
Lot 8 Grasstree Beach Rd,
MACKAY 4740.

Dear GRs,

New readers to GR are perhaps wondering just **HOW MUCH LAND IS REQUIRED** for a fair measure of self-sufficiency. Would two, three, five or ten acres be enough. The short answer is not much at all. To get a perspective on this, the six raised beds at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens regularly featured on the 'Gardening Australia' TV program are a perfect example of what can be achieved on what is a quite small area.

The six raised beds each measure two by four metres and operate on a six-year rotation to avoid disease problems. The beds would provide the average family with much of their requirements. Fruit trees can now be grown on dwarf root stocks, thus keeping to an easily managed and compact habit. Where there is a handy fence an espalier tree could fit in nicely.

The raised beds were originally filled with low-grade sandy soil enriched with various manures, mulch and compost and all on a total area of 48 square metres. Do you really need all that acreage for self-sufficiency?

Alan Stewart,
12 Weymouth Plc, ALEXANDRA HILLS 4161.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Folk,

In answer to Lois Haslet's query (GR 158) on how to **LEARN TO CROCHET LEFT-HANDED**: There are two ways you can try – either by sitting in front of a right-handed person and mirroring their movements, or by placing your instruction book (if you have one), with illustrations, against a mirror, so you can read the instructions, but look at the left-handed pictures in the mirror.

Sharyn McDonald wanted to know where to get CDs or **TAPES OF FROG CALLS** for south-east Victoria. The Birding Shop can help you with CDs and tapes of frog calls from all over the country, including a cassette (only) of the calls of Victorian frogs. The Birding Shop, 415 Riversdale Rd, Hawthorn East 3123, ph: 03-9813-5488, fax: 03-9813-1744, email: sales@thebirdingshop.com

This is not an extreme solution to Catherine's problem of reducing the amount of Salazopyrin she needs to take for her **INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE**, but just an observation which could be of interest to those with this awful condition. The women I know who suffer from this have no symptoms and take no medication when they are pregnant! Whether it has something to do with the hormonal changes that occur at this time is not known, or at least not clear, but perhaps, for some of those women who want to do so, starting a family might help with this.

I always seem to be too late to congratulate the GR folk on their milestones, but my belated best wishes on your latest and the hope that the magazine (if not those behind it) will keep on for many years to come. I've been reading since issue 19 and many friends have come from contact with other readers. Keep up the good work.

Jenny Lacey,
55 Gorry Rd, RED LION via TALBOT 3371.

Dear GR Readers,

I was rereading GR 158 and replying to Yvonne Landgrebe's query for a **PICKLED GARLIC RECIPE**. Mix 1 litre water, 250 millilitres white vinegar, 5 tablespoons sugar and 1 tablespoon salt together. Bring to boil, separate garlic bulbs and peel (only if skin is hard and dry), otherwise leave skin on if soft. Add garlic to boiling mixture for one minute. Pack into jars, making sure garlic is completely covered with liquid. Store in a dark cool place for one week. Refrigerate after opening. Flavour improves with time. I am still eating the last batch I made two years ago.

Re Christine McDonnell, **CHOOKS WITH LICE**: GR 58 mentions the protection of stored grain by using finely ground mineral magnesite (it is a raw material of Salvital, Eno's Salts and Andrews Liver Salts). Also, it says it protects seed stocks – maybe OK for chook lice?

Re Shane's request for **SHIRTS TO DO WITH THE ENVIRONMENT**: Your local recycling, second-hand or op shops offer excellent 100 percent cotton and linen clothing. There are plenty of white business shirts. Maybe you can hand-dye them with onion skins and such for colour. Cost per item is between $1 and $4.

E Baker requested a **LEMON BUTTER RECIPE**. You need 250 grams butter, 500 grams sugar, 4 eggs, juice of 4 lemons, rind of 3 lemons. Put butter and sugar in a saucepan, place on heat and stir until clear. Add 4 yolks and 2 whites of eggs (well beaten), juice and grated rind of lemons, stir and cook until like honey.

Wendy Robinson, please write if you still need a ginger beer recipe (my recipe is old and hasn't caused any bottles to explode).

My own request is to find a ginger plant that will grow in the New England climate and a Jerusalem (not globe) artichoke plant. I'd also like information on: setting up an organic co-op, information and costs (positive and negative) on publishing your own book, how to achieve organic certification and costs involved. Is anyone producing herb teas for sale or export? I would like to know more about this. Any information, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in anticipation, WWOOFers welcome.

Maree,
PO Box 74, URALLA 2358.

Regarding chooks with lice, Megg wrote an article about this in GR 154.

Dear Megg & Mary,

In GR 158 there was a response to problems with **TERMITES AND CHEMICALS** that are used. When treated as written, only that nest will be killed off. Dursban was a highly successful product and was of a particular concentration as a termiticide. Chlorpyrifos is still available at the local nurseries and hardware garden sections, but is not sold as termite control.

Arsenics are very dangerous, but are easily identified by their colour: red/blue/grey. If you see these colours in or about your home, then they have not been applied safely. However, once the arsenic is applied to termite workings it sticks well and is stable; it does not remove or dislodge when blown on or bumped, therefore being 'relatively' safe. However, if you do not want chemicals about your home, where possible expose foundations and keep all items away from the house. A simple blade of grass will give opportunity to a termite scout out looking for a feast for its colony. Remove the chance of possible invasions and keep your eyes open. There is a particular termite in Queensland that cannot be deterred or controlled by the normal means, so it is always best to get the professionals in because this termite must be reported to government departments.

Ex-pesty,
18 Bletchinton St, ORANGE 2800.

Dear GR Mates,

My idea is probably a little late to help Lynette K (GR 116) who had trouble **CATCHING MICE IN TRAPS**. They are pretty sneaky, so you have to outthink them. I have had a lot of success with placing the traps against a wall and putting a brick on either side of the traps and then sprinkling some broken biscuit around the bait area, which should face the wall. The mice have to crawl all over the trap to get to the biscuit and invariably get caught.

Is the jury still out on whether it is dangerous to grow **VEGETABLES IN POLYSTYRENE BOXES?**

Phil Crowe,
Lot 1 Greendale to Blackwood Rd,
BLACKWOOD 3458.

Dear Grass Roots,

Hoping you're all well and happy. I would like to make some garden pots and wonder if anyone knows about **LATEX FOR MOULDING** and how to go about it. Or, can you buy latex moulds and from where and what is latex made from?

Marg Mason,
HOPETOUN 6348.

Dear Megg,

What wonderful feedback and letters I received from my article **'I REMEMBER WHEN'**, and how lovely to see it in your 30th year edition. Thank you GR and everyone who wrote. We actually moved to Killarney in February 2003 and the postmaster re-addressed everything. Everyone who contacted me said the article made them walk back in time, so I encourage you all to jot down your memories. Again, thank you everyone and enjoy the great reading.

Barbara Chapman,
KILLARNEY 3283.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

Does anyone have a recipe for **CHOCOLATE, MADE FROM SCRATCH?** I'd love to hear from you.

In return here's a really nice recipe for **WORCESTER SAUCE**. It is very like the English one. You need 2 centimetres fresh root ginger (bruised), 2 cloves garlic (bruised), 6 teaspoons whole cloves, 4¾ cups white vinegar, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 cups black treacle. Place all ingredients into a large saucepan and stir to combine. Cover and bring to the boil. Simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stand overnight. Next day strain and bottle. Seal and store. Can be used straight away, but it does improve with age – like us all!

Shirley Smith.

Dear GR Readers,

We have only recently discovered GR because a new friend loaned us lots of back issues. We must have spent our lives with our heads stuck in the sand! What a fantastic publication! We have eagerly devoured each morsel of information. Well, myself, hubby Paul and three sons moved into our dream 100-year-old cottage on three acres nearly two years ago. It's situated on the beautiful Fleurieu Peninsula in SA. Life is fantastic, but a struggle due to Paul losing his job a week after we signed on the dotted line for this property! At 56, he is finding it tough to get employment. There is so much we want to do, but financial constraints dictate so much. Still, we wouldn't swap our lives for anyone else's!

The point of my letter is this: We read a letter in Feedback, GR 67 (June 1988) from a young woman who (would you believe), lived here in our very small community of Ashbourne. She was in a very sad way and I haven't stopped thinking of her and wondering if she managed to move on and find happiness in her life. So, LS, if you are still a GR reader, I would love you to contact us. Who knows, we may have bought your lovely home!

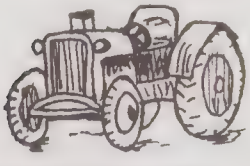
We are truly blessed with love and joy in our family and appreciate where we are. Paul is revegetating half of our land, hoping to get the vegie garden growing and I am nagging for a horse. I would love to **WRITE TO OTHER MUMS**, so drop us a line if you are optimistic, generally happy, love animals, chocolate, music, your family and life!

Lyn Villiers,
'Beggars Roost', PO Box 23, ASHBOURNE 5157.

Dear Megg, Mary & Co,

I've been living for a few years in Australia now and reading GR. My love is organic gardening and alternative lifestyles and I've saved the money to buy my own hobby farm. I like the idea of having a **CLYDESDALE INSTEAD OF A TRACTOR**, so I am wanting to do a course to see if it would suit me and whether I can handle it. I have not been able to find the right contact address for such a course. Maybe some reader can help me out.

Gaby Kahler,
PO Box 4, CABARITA,
MILDURA 3505.



Gulf Station, a historic farm on the edge of Melbourne holds days featuring working horses, ph 03-9730-1286 for contacts.

Dear Megg & Family,

We have been keen readers of and subscribers to your magazine for a while now. We are currently living on a remote Aboriginal community island – Elcho Island, East Arnhem Land. I have been able to put into practice some of our *Grass Roots* ideas. I had not realised how much knowledge I had unconsciously absorbed. It has come in handy – right down to making pineapple sage 'ginger' beer! (We live in a dry community – no alcohol.)

What are the pros and cons of **BUILDING A STONE HOUSE IN TASMANIA?** Are there any stonemasons in Tasmania who could contact us and discuss our options?

Up here we listen to the Macca show on Sunday mornings. The program is a little like the GR Feedback (of course, it's not as good as *Grass Roots*!).

We have come from land (10 acres) to an ocean environment, with lots of fishing (no swimming due to crocs, sharks and stingers). We have confirmed our belief that we are definitely land people, and so are heading to our new address on 40 acres in Tasmania.

Lorraine Hill,
157 Fletcher Rd, KARNUP 6176.
Email: lorraine_elcho@yahoo.com.au

Dear GR Readers,

Although I've been a GR reader for many years, I've never put pen to paper before. Now I feel I must do so for the environment. Cheryl Beasley in GR 158 wrote about using privet – large-leaf, or small-leaf variety was not indicated. She writes that it is an easy shrub to grow and quite vigorous. I'm writing to let readers know that in south-east Queensland, **PRIVET IS NOW A DECLARED WEED** – no longer to be sold from nurseries.

Other declared weeds listed from the same local gardening program include: African tulip trees, Dutchman's pipe, asparagus ferns (especially those which produce red berries), Athel pine trees, blackberry, wide-leaf pepperina trees, camphor laurel trees, cats claw, celtis trees, lantana (including garden varieties), Singapore daisy, tecoma, pencil willows and privet (small-leaf and large-leaf varieties). For the present these plants already in gardens are permissible, but why not dig them out if you have any in your area? Sorry for the lack of botanical names of these **ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS**.

Yvonne Jackson,
27 Myall St, DALBY 4405.

Thanks for the information Yvonne. Readers should be aware that there are many dozens of plants listed as environmental weeds (and hundreds more with the potential to become so), but some can vary from area to area. Check with your local authorities or environment group. Many progressive councils have published illustrated booklets.

Dear GRs,

Congratulations on 30 years GR team. To have the time to put a publication together and run your own GR lives is by no means an easy task. Thanks to you all.

Can anyone tell me if a **PERMACULTURE COURSE** can be obtained **BY CORRESPONDENCE**? I work 6am to 2.30pm five week days and this does not accommodate me to attend a two-week or more away-from-home course.

Does anyone know where I could obtain a **FEIJOA PLANT** by mail order? We live two kilometres from the coast in the mid tropics in zone 9 – 11.

Finally, but definitely not least, a huge thank-you to Vera J, Mell M, Judy S, Nadia P, Dot L and Anon from Toowoomba for your absolutely scrumbo yumbo gumbo and **OKRA RECIPES**. Any more from anyone after this publication, thank you too.

JH,
PO Box 460, MIDGE POINT 4799.

Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Grass Roots Staff,

Help! In one of your old issues, GR 123, page 48, is a recipe for **LEMON YEAST BREAD**. How long, if at all, does the lemon yeast mix have to stand? The writer does not say, but I presume it must ferment before use. Can anyone help?

Thank you for your contributions to our survival in these times of conflicting advice on how to stay healthy.

Jean Adams,
18 Pym St, MILLTHORPE 2798.

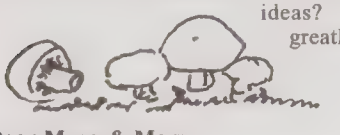
Dear GR Readers,

I have been reading GR now for eight years and have enjoyed every issue. My husband and I are slowly moving closer to living a self-sufficient lifestyle. It has been quite a journey and we have much further to travel. One day I might get a chance to put pen to paper and share our experiences, but with a 13-month-old baby other priorities come first.

It was interesting to read Maggie-May's letter (GR 158) regarding how easy it is to **MAKE YOGHURT**. I agree it is very easy, but I have been using a method for quite a few years that doesn't involve the cost and is still very simple. Heat 1 litre of milk in a saucepan (pasteurised milk works well if that is all you have available). Using a cooking thermometer, heat milk until temperature reaches 85 – 90° C. Make sure the thermometer doesn't touch the base of the saucepan otherwise an incorrect reading will result. Cool milk to 44° C; it takes generally about 15 minutes. Add 1 heaped tablespoon of plain yoghurt and mix well. The yoghurt must contain live cultures. Place the mixture into a jar and seal. Wrap in a towel, or place in a thermal flask, and leave overnight. Avoid moving it and disturbing the process. This makes a litre of yoghurt. The best thing is that the next time you need to make another batch you use a heaped tablespoon of your own yoghurt as a starter. This can be done until the yoghurt becomes too watery and then just start the whole process over again.

One recipe that I did use the yoghurt for was a yoghurt cheese. It turned out like a cheese spread only really tangy. Again, very simple to do. Cut a large piece of cheesecloth and double it over. Dampen the cloth then place the contents of the jar of yoghurt into it. Tie it up and let it hang overnight – the whey drains out and you are left with the cheese. It lasts about two weeks in the fridge and is a lot healthier for you than the commercial cheese spreads.

I am hoping for some help from GR readers. I'm interested in **GROWING MY OWN MUSHROOMS**. I have used the mushroom kits and have done quite well, but I want to be able to continue the process without having to keep purchasing the boxes. I am sure I read somewhere a few years ago that if you soak barley in water this can be the basis of mushroom growing. Does anyone know what I'm talking about? I'd also like to have a go at growing the wild mushrooms – shiitake, oyster and the like. Any ideas? All information would be greatly appreciated.



Leanne Davidson,
PO Box 18,
BOWRAVILLE 2449.

Dear Megg & Mary,

I recently bought GR for the first time for many years. I noticed a letter about **INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE** and felt I had to tell of my experience in curing myself of this dreaded problem. In April of 1999 I was diagnosed with ulcerative colonitis and Crohn's disease. I was determined to treat it naturally and went on various diets and natural supplements. To some extent these helped, but I was never completely well.

In October of last year I found a diet that has removed my symptoms and helped thousands of others do the same! Look at these websites: www.breakingthevicioussycle.org, www.scdiet.org, www.healingcrow.com and www.scdiet.com

I ordered the book *Breaking The Vicious Cycle – Intestinal Health Through Diet* by Elaine Gottschall through Amazon.com (available in Australia but the ordering wait was six weeks and I couldn't wait that long!), published by The Kirkton Press, Baltimore, Ontario, Canada.

Quote from the book: 'In 1968 we took out eight-year-old daughter to Drs Hass. Three years before she had been diagnosed by specialists as having incurable ulcerative colitis and her condition was deteriorating. The years of treatment with cortisone and sulfonamides, plus innumerable other medical approaches, had been unsuccessful and surgery seemed imminent. The Drs Hass placed her on the specific carbohydrate diet and within two years she was free of symptoms. She returned to eating normally after another few years and has remained in excellent health since then.'

The author of the book (who is the mother of the child) went back to university later in her life and did her MSc on the SCD (Specific Carbohydrate Diet). Basically, the diet is no grains (even the exotic ones) and no sugars. Simple! The theory is that the gut of people who have any sort of digestive or bowel problem is overpopulated with bad bacteria. The specific carbs of these sugars and grains feed the bacteria so they thrive and continue to multiply. Their presence prevents the absorption in the gut of the food components necessary to good health. So stop the grains and sugars and starve the critters out!

There is incredible support for those who need it. There's an email group with dozens of sufferers talking about the diet and how it affects them and the author of the book, now 85 years of age, also replies to the emails. There is also an Australian email list and website. Cooking is simple with many recipes available and also a recipe book. Honey is allowed as it is immediately digested. The substitute for grains is almond flour – marvellous stuff!

It is also important to repopulate the gut with good bacteria and to this end you make your own yoghurt. There is a special recipe, but it is very easy and I make mine in a container in my frypan. The important bit about this is that the yoghurt is fermented for 24 hours. During that time the milk sugar lactose is changed into lactase, which is immediately digested and this way the good bacteria are introduced to the gut. The starter yoghurt is very specific and must not have bifidus (this is not in the book as Elaine recently discovered this – one reason to be on the email list!).

This is a serious diet and you must not stray. The author says; 'It is unwise to undertake this regimen unless you are willing to follow it with **FANATICAL ADHERENCE**'. However, I've never been hungry and it's the easiest diet I've ever tried. No longer do I rush to the toilet about 12 times a day, or do a recce for the nearest public toilet! My energy has returned and I can now eat 'normal' foods.

I am happy to send more information if you email me, but please remember I am not an expert! To follow this diet correctly you need to have the book as it has lists of foods that are allowed and those that are not. For instance, it lists the allowable cheeses.

This SCD should be known far and wide as the author says that most people cannot digest grains completely and have some type of IBD (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) that may be completely unnoticed. Some of these symptoms seem far removed; for example, the medical doctor who wrote the foreword lists headaches, muscle aches, arthritis, skin rashes, psoriasis, fatigue, stiff joints and some mental problems. The author also maintains that coeliac sufferers should be on this diet as just using a gluten-free diet is not enough and there is a chapter especially for coeliacs.

Margaret Brabrook,
Email: maroint@iprimus.com.au

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GRs,

I read with interest the letter from Edwin Morris in GR 158. I agree with you that our society framework has gone askew, causing massive problems with the family unit, but I think there has to be a happy in-between.

Both my husband and I work and have no plans for children at this stage. We are both in our early 30s and shudder when we see the way some parents treat their children, and vice versa, and also the way partners treat and talk to each other. In our case I can confidently say that it is family background that gives us our strong relationship. My husband comes from a home with happy siblings and parents who are still together and in a happy marriage. I, on the other hand, come from a broken home with an alcoholic father and was determined from the outset to make my marriage work. Twelve years on and seven years of marriage later I think I must be on the right track.

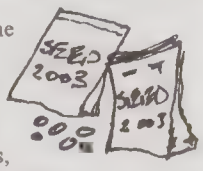
In this day and age it would be wonderful if we could get back to old-fashioned values, but one wage from the husband is not always enough to live off. I'm also sure that in years gone by a family with the wife staying at home with the husband providing did not, and still does not, always mean a happy home. There is way too much pressure from media and stores trying to convince everyone of all the expensive material gadgets they need to remain happy and doing a good job of brainwashing everyone. People don't know how to talk anymore, just argue. Television and computers mean couples can be in the same house all day and hardly interact with each other.

We have to get back to people having **COUNSELLING BEFORE THEY GET MARRIED**. It doesn't matter whether it's in a church or with a celebrant, I believe the biggest problem is that people go into relationships with unreal expectations, not knowing their partners well enough and not having the tools to sort out problems and issues before they become insurmountable. I work serving the public every day and I look at some family groups, and the children attached, knowing the poor little blighters don't have much of a chance to grow up with a good role model. It saddens me, but that's society. I just make sure I have the most positive influence I can with all my blood and honourary nieces and nephews.

Sharyn McDonald,
10 Terry St, PEARCEDALE 3912.

Dear GR & Readers,

Just love GR, been reading it since the beginning.



I have been trying to find climbing lima bean seeds, Jerusalem artichoke tubers, Lebanese cress and ox heart tomato seeds. I have these seeds to swap: Madagascar beans, hibiscus spinach, Ceylon spinach and Indian basil.

Was very interested to read in April/May issue article about piebald sheep with blue eyes, having bred the same myself.

B Griffin,
149 Noakes Rd, TRAVESTON 4570.
Ph: 0419-795-149.

Dear GR,

Replying to Philip Wilson (GR 158) enquiring about **SWAN PLANT**, balloon cotton or milkweed (*Gomphocarpus physocarpus*, formerly *Asclepias physocarpa*). This is a major environmental weed infesting hectares of land in Queensland and northern NSW, and definitely not recommended for garden planting. If you wish to encourage monarch butterflies, oleanders are the lesser evil, though these are quite poisonous to children and livestock too. However, they don't escape and spread with the same rapidity as does balloon cotton. It is unlikely that any responsible Australian nursery would stock balloon cotton plant.

Also, replying to Roberino re **BUSH MEDICINE**: Be very, very careful about self-treatment using unfamiliar plants. Aborigines had no treatments for many illnesses and conditions, and, like traditional medicines from all cultures, not all that were used actually worked. Just because something was used doesn't mean it was effective, and being a plant doesn't ensure automatic success. Above all, be absolutely certain your identification is accurate, that you know the correct method of preparation and amount to use, and you have researched the chemical composition (there can be hidden nasties).

Lenore Lindsay,
ROCKHAMPTON 4700.

G'day,

It is 11 years since I left the land to experience the boating scene, which I am thoroughly enjoying. But there is still that something that keeps drawing me back to the land. Therefore, I am doing something about it. I'm going to start on the land again from scratch. I'll still keep the yacht – it's been a treasure to me as a host for WWOOF and the 400+ WWOOFers I've had annually on board. My writings for *Earth Garden* have kept me in touch with the land with many travel experiences and people I have met whilst WWOOFing myself.

The land that has drawn me back is of 90 hectares, typical of Australia's climate: eucalypts, three dams, beautiful creek that all but dries out in the droughts, and has all the usual challenges that nature can throw at us. There are two houses that grew overnight (put there), no power, and beaut like-minded neighbours. It's five kilometres to a village and 90 kilometres to coastal Queensland and is in the negotiating stage. Adverts in *Grass Roots* and *Earth Garden* for 'pioneers' to help run the place will bring forth the best I can find to share the challenge, pitfalls and rewards of this exciting new enterprise with organics as the keyword.

Col Statham,
C/- Runaway Bay Marina,
247 Bayview St, RUNAWAY BAY 4216.
Ph: 0438-720-156.

Dear Megg & Staff,

It's always great to read GR. Sadly, I've missed a few copies and never seem to be able to afford a subscription no matter how I try. Today I grabbed one of the few copies of GR 158 left in the newsagent. Have already replied to several readers and now have a request myself.

Does anyone know how to get rid of a bad **PATCH OF BUR** growing on the straight track of our greyhound training property? One son tried burning it after cutting it a couple of months ago, but inadvertently used petrol and was badly burnt as a result. I'm laid up with arthritis and varicose ulcers and not as active as I used to be. At present we, of course, don't use the straight track, because of the bur problem, but the racing dogs and pups would benefit greatly if we could use it. The thought of what would happen to a poor dog if one of those nasty things got in its foot makes my blood run cold. I first noticed them when I got one in my foot just after we moved here. I've been cutting them and putting them in plastic bags and then in the wheelie bin, but still they come and I don't like using poisons. I'll welcome any suggestions.

Shirley Svensson,
33 Buccan Rd, BUCCAN 4207.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

Congratulations on 30 years! Was I really 24 when I first began to read GR! And have I been milking a goat for that long! (Not the same goat of course!) I am still learning from GR and being inspired. The last couple of editions have inspired me to revamp my chook house and to explore the idea of building using tyres. So thank you for still being here and may you continue to link us all together.

Many people want to live simply, to live their ideas and dreams, to live their reality which differs from the commercial claptrap of consumerism. For 30 years, as a womyn who follows **THE MYSTERIES OF THE GODDESS**, I dreamed of a womynspirit retreat. Two years ago I began to make a reality of my dreamings and vision. I bought 157 acres in the Mallee of SA. She is named 'Artemis' because of her association with the animals, especially dogs, and for all the attributes of Artemis/Dianna.

Slowly we grow. The land produces barley, has ancient bush and fragile sand dunes. Eagles fly, wombats waddle and lizards are glorious in their coats of frill or the colours of bright yellow and black.

Being a Romani, Gypsy womyn, I still travel by horse and wagon and am deeply associated with horses and dogs. Two 15-year-old dog friends returned to spirit this year and I'm now down to four dog friends, which feels quite strange.

I am a caretaker here on earth, of the earth and the nonhumans I share this plant with. I am a voice for them to remind all humans that they live with animals and that their behaviour towards all the nonhumans leaves a great deal to be desired. So 'Artemis' is home to many rescued nonhumans. Visitors must like animals or there is no point in them being here.

It took me two years to clear all the rubbish from previous occupants of the land and now 'Artemis' is singing and growing. She has accommodation in a guest bedroom, three caravans and a tent. There is a guest kitchen, temple, moon bath, womb-room for massage and healing and a grotto, a vegie garden, labyrinth, seat of the witch and a large shearing shed for workshop space. I have a large library and music collection. I am proud of my Gypsy heritage, am a storyteller (gossip), photographer, author and hearth-witch. 'Artemis' is my gift to those who follow or wish to know the pathway of Goddess spirituality. Men are welcome, accompanied by a womyn, when 'Artemis' is not a retreat or workshop. I also welcome WWOOFers and any person who would like to work in exchange for meals and accommodation.

Red Catherine,
'Artemis' RSD 629, MANNUM 5238.
Ph: 08-8569-6008.
Email: redcatherine50@hotmail.com

Dear Grass Roots,

Hello all! Anyone know how I'd go about **SELLING A BLACK FLEECE**? I have a pet sheep that was shorn in September. He's black and a pure-bred Merino. According to the farmer who breeds Merinos, he has an excellent fleece, with a very long staple length – good for spinning. I'd like to sell the fleece, but no-one round here buys black wool. Anyone out there who can help me? I'd love to hear from you.

Deborah McDonnell,
Munro's Rd, WALPEUP 3507.

Dear Grass Roots People,

I live in a small one-bedroom flat in the growing **TOWN OF DAPTO** on the south coast of NSW. In my little backyard I grow avocados, raspberries, strawberries, peaches, tomatoes, potatoes and more. The flat is 15 minutes away from the rail station and five minutes from the bus stop and shops. In other words, it is a little piece of nature's paradise.

Now the problem: I have landed excellent employment in Sydney and the travelling is killing me. I need to move closer to Sydney and am looking for someone who understands what it means to have a family of bluetongue lizards in the backyard and appreciate how beautiful they are. I started to work with a small group of people to recolonise rare and endangered frogs in the area. All of this work is on hold until I can find someone willing to nurture the garden as I have. I also practise water-saving techniques.

I need to share with some alternative life people somewhere closer to Sydney. I do not wish to pay ridiculous rent prices as I wish to journey to China with my Tai Chi group next year. I am an employed grandmother who loves nature and all animals – I just have a problem with some humans who destroy nature at their peril.

Contact me please if you want to know more about my flat in Dapto, or if you know of a place that might suit me that's not too far from Sydney.

Ms Margaret Johanson,
Unit 3/15 Moran Ave, DAPTO 2530.

Hi Megg & Team,

We're finally making the move to our property in 2004. I'd like to correspond/meet up with other GR people in the **MUDGEE/DUBBO AREA**, particularly vegetarians or vegans.

Fiona,
PO Box 881, GLEBE 2037.

Hi Megg & Mary,

I am seeking support for a proposed **COMMUNITY VILLAGE** – hands-on ecotourism and educative development, to be created in the Mornington Peninsula/Gippsland area. This could coincide perfectly with this area being named the first worldwide urban biosphere by UNESCO recently. I envisage the village being sustainable and eco-friendly, of 60 – 100 acres and having three unique features:

Educating the public at large from day one, who will all be invited to help build and maintain the entire project, thus giving thousands of people valuable life skills to take away with them to their communities, creating a ripple effect. 'Public' includes schools, low-income and other disadvantaged people, who miss out on securing mortgages.

The homes will be living, breathing display homes. Regular opening to the public, once built, will further educate the general public. The main residence will be as similar to a mainstream home as possible, to demonstrate the resounding viability of sustainable living. This home will also be ergonomic, conserving cleaning and maintenance energy, another drawcard for harassed home owners and housekeepers.

The entrepreneurial aspect will ensure long-standing success and ripple effect of supporting other sustainable projects further afield. Also groundbreaking will be the social aspects of communication among those in residence, and the alternative, independent, child-centred education in the school, more so because of the educative-tourist component of the whole project.

Other features I envisage include resource centre, visitors' overnight accommodation, community hall, community school, community vegie garden, farmlet, orchard, public playground, café and shops selling sustainable crafts and products from on site and elsewhere. I expect companies to donate their products, in return for the amazing promotion via display homes that are inhabited – first-hand testimonials! Bequeathing of land, financial and products sponsorship, and hands-on participation in steering and building this project is needed.

Jacqui,
Ph: 03-9776-7430.
Email: rjbrowne@alphalink.com.au

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots Friends,

In July 1999 or around that date a letter appeared from Sister Christa Palfy who had a cure for the white tailed spider bite. I sent a cheque as requested in the ad, but it was returned as I left it a little late to send. If any readers have a copy of her cure I would love to purchase same.

Fay Sommers,
7 Ingra Cl, MEDOWIE 2318

Dear GR People,

I am keen to obtain detailed directions about how to preserve some foods for flavouring purposes: first, **HORSERADISH**, and second, **HOT PEPPERS IN OLIVE OIL**. I have tried a recipe for horseradish sauce that used vinegar, salt and ascorbic acid, but it was not satisfactory. I'd appreciate advice from experienced preservers.

Eugenio Muratore,
695 Lower North East Rd, PARADISE 5075.

Dear GR Nice-Type People,

I am so grateful for the work you do in your magazine! It cheers me immensely!

I've had such great success, people writing, phoning to excess. An email here, a postcard there. One anon, from who knows where? So many I cannot possibly reply, I'm lousy at correspondence (sigh), but here is **MY THANK YOU** to all the kind souls who went to such trouble searching to poles Antarctic and Arctic, it seems to me. You lovely people make me so happy! To A Woodhouse, with old Crown stove. Don't let it annoy you, or get you down. Cut a steel plate; fabrication's the go and soon you'll have a warm, hearty glow!

Leonie Edge,
5 Commercial Rd, KOROIT 3282.

Dear GRs,

Readers might be interested in my son's experience with a suspected white tailed spider bite. A reader in GR 114 suggested using a dressing made from vitamin C powder and taking vitamin C internally. A nurse told my son to keep the blister dry and to periodically soak the wound in a fairly strong solution of Condy's crystals in water (strong enough for the water to look dark purple). He was reluctant to use the vitamin C dressing because the blister had broken and he wanted to keep it dry, but did take the tablets and felt they helped the healing. It took a month for the wound to heal and the Condy's solution gave relief and stopped the sore from weeping. I must add that we are unsure of the identification of the spider.

H Leach,
PO Box 1468, ALBANY 6331.

Dear GR Friends,

Thanks Megg and friends for a great mag. I have been reading it for years but never find time to write. My daughter Sally and I had a second-hand shop in Daylesford for the past six years. It was a great experience but the time came for a change. We recently closed the shop and have started an Internet business. It is a whole new life. We hope to **START TRAVELLING** in Australia next year, so if anyone is interested in seeing our handmade clothes or jewellery, either for shop or self, let us know on our email address: buy@gypsywheels.com

Meryl,
6 Duke St, DAYLESFORD 3460.

Dear Megg,

After reading Feedback in the last issue of GR, I thought I would reply about **MOVING HOUSES**. My husband and I spent a few years moving, renovating and enjoying our home we created from two ex-commission houses. We bought them from two different moving companies over a two-year period. We originally bought one house of three bedrooms. The moving company moved the house, restumped it and put it all back together for us. We had applied to the local council for a building permit, which they approved. As our family grew we needed an extension, so we bought another house of two bedrooms from another moving company and joined the two together. We paid a plumber to reroof the house, which also incorporated a wide veranda all the way around it. The same plumber replumbed the house and we paid an electrician to rewire it. We did the rest of the work ourselves.

When the house was finished it had five bedrooms, two bathrooms, two living areas, a new kitchen with walk-in pantry and the old-fashioned feeling of a house that had been lived in for years.

Work commitments meant we had to sell our home and we had to apply to an independent building insurance firm to inspect it. We then paid the independent insurance firm a one-off payment, which gave our home a seven-year warranty on our workmanship. The new owners of our house were very happy. They had six children and the house was ideal for them.

In reply to a reader's statement that you don't get a seven-year warranty: That was not the case for us. If you are going to move a recycled house, you expect the floors to be a bit uneven; you know that things won't always fit exactly as they did before. What we found is that you can get value for money, a house that has character and history and a place that has stood the test of time.

The cost of moving two houses and renovating them compared to building a new one at the time was substantially lower than new price. To build a 17-square house with 19-squares of verandah on five acres of bush would have cost twice as much. In the end we spent about $60,000 on the project. My advice is to shop around and ask lots of questions from people who have done it. Remember, if you are an owner builder and you work full time the project could take some time and, depending on your council, you might not have a lot of time to finish the project.

Jane Colbert,
PO Box 232, MALLACOOTA 3892.

Dear GR Readers,

Can somebody please tell me where I can find current information on **BEE KEEPING**? I have never kept bees before and I live in an extremely dry climate. I am particularly interested in native bees.

Also, does anyone have a **FIRE BRICK MAKER** that they no longer want? It seems that nobody sells them any more.

To Jodie, Geoff & Cooper Towne of Grovedale (GR 159): try Whyalla, SA. They are crying out for professionals such as nurses and teachers. It's a coastal community (population approximately 23,000) with many schools, sporting and community clubs and yes . . . . pubs! Contact Whyalla information centre and some local real estate agents for yourselves. Good Luck!

For Tina Marsh of Hope Island (also GR 159): **PATTERN BOOKS FOR MACRAME** are always at garage sales! Jute twine can be found in hardware stores, or ordered through your closest craft outlet.

Tina,
PO Box 34, IRON KNOB 5601.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

The Backyard Supermarket

by Val Smetheram, Wishart, Qld.

'This the backyard stuff? Hey it's not bad is it?' My better half raised an eyebrow and sipped appreciatively. 'This' was the first taste of coffee from our little backyard bush. Its first flowering produced merely a saucerful of beans, just enough to process and brew two cups.

As with all my gardening attempts, it's a trial and error sort of thing. I didn't know if a coffee bush would grow in a suburban backyard in Brisbane where it's somewhat crowded in amongst other things (our backyard is never big enough for all I want to do with it), but there it is. At time of writing (November) it was smothered in flowers, so I guess it likes where we've placed it. The next crop looks like being much larger.

Processing is not exactly a simple job. In fact, it's rather labour intensive, but I'm learning as I go. The sense of satisfaction is enormous, as with anything you manage to produce for yourself that makes you even slightly less dependent on the supermarket.

First, the ripe berries have to be soaked till the fleshy part can be rubbed off. The beans (two within each berry) are then sun dried, which, here in Brisbane, took some weeks. Up in the hot dry north it's probably a faster procedure. Our Italian friend told us they spread their crop out on the ground on black plastic for drying. 'What about showers?' I asked him 'Ah, the sun, she soon dry them all out again', he said, laughing.

When the beans are dried thoroughly, the next skin has to come off as well. They are then bluey grey in colour, brittle and ready for roasting. I rubbed them through my hands to remove that skin, but there must be an easier way.

Ah, the roasting! The delicious smell wafted through the house. I roasted my few at 200° C till they were nicely brown and our place had the aroma of a coffee shop. I ground the beans immediately in my small Bamix attachment, then brewed and drank . . . wonderful! As for caffeine content, I really don't know, but as I rarely drink more than one cup a day and my bloke hardly ever, for us it wouldn't matter. For those concerned about caffeine intake, maybe it would pay to have their product analysed. Would it be stronger than commercial coffee? It would be interesting to find out.

I realise that not many people would bother to grow and process coffee. However, even though it's a lot of work, there's really nothing to compare with that feeling of having produced it yourself and knowing that if you had to resort to home produce in an emergency, it's there only metres from your back door.

Basic information on growing and processing I gleaned from Jackie French's book, *Backyard Self-Sufficiency*. I'm sure other writers, too, have written on this subject. But even following someone else's directions, you can still be unsure. There's nothing like getting in there and trying it for yourself. The hands-on method is still the best way of learning.

The coffee looks like being one of our successes. We've had a few failures though, mostly because I just have to try growing things even though they may not suit our area. Really, a person is probably setting themselves up for failure if they do that. However, it's the challenge of it I enjoy. After all, some people climb mountains just because they are there.

We've had success with figs, cumquats, limes, Ceylon hill cherries, and mulberries. This year our feijoa tree flowered (prolifically) for the first time. Do they fruit here in Queensland? We'll find out. We certainly enjoyed them during our years in New Zealand. The custard apple has flowers also for the first time. The tree, which came up from seed, was allowed to remain because it was fast growing and we needed shade in that spot. If it fruits as well, that will be a bonus. I'm also waiting eagerly for the Jaboticaba to fruit. It's growing well and is one and a half times as tall as ourselves now, after about five years, so that will be one to watch. Likewise, the acerola cherry, the olive tree and the

Val's coffee bush in prolific flower in her packed but productive suburban backyard.

peachcot. And I still have in mind to try tea (*Camellia sinensis*) and vanilla (which is probably tricky). I nursed a noni tree through a couple of years and then lost it to a much cooler winter than usual. I *will* try these difficult plants.

As for vegetables, there again it's some successes, some failures, but we keep trying. After reading Toni Gurren's article on kale in GR 159, I decided that maybe it was something I should try. I now have baby plants with frilly leaves. Kale is a handsome plant, looking more as though it should be in the flower garden than with the vegies. The flavour is good and as a green it's very acceptable. We just have to find out how it will survive in this climate. There have only been a few looper caterpillars around so far, and unfortunately they like the taste of the kale. Ah well, I had lots of training back in childhood picking the wrigglers off the cabbage, so it's not too much of a hardship. I'll just throw my Lux soapsuds over them after the hand-washing.

What a great hobby this gardening is! It's certainly addictive, maybe even more so than coffee. I must go and check my alpine strawberries a seed-saver friend sent me. That shower of rain must have spurred them on a bit. Excuse me, won't you?

DIY Coffee Processing

by Natasha Evans, Yandina, Qld.

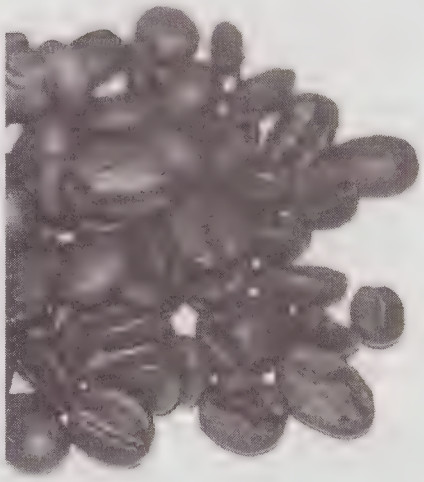
One afternoon in May, my sister and I rode our bikes down the drive and noticed four coffee trees with lots of red berries on them. Seeing they were ripe we picked them and put them into a purple plant pot, 410 berries altogether. Then we had to learn how to process them to make coffee.

HOW TO MAKE COFFEE

Step 1

You put the berries in a third of a bucket of water and soak them. Take out and throw away any that float. Then squeeze them. Two white seeds should come out of every berry. The skin from the berries is great for compost. Next, put them back in the bucket and let them sit for 48 hours; by then the water should be foggy. Drain off the water and put the berries on a tray to dry.

If you have a wood fire, as we do,



you can put the coffee berries close to the fire and leave them there for about five days. Now peel the coffee berries, put them in a separate bowl and leave them there for three weeks. To peel the berries, every time we walked past the end of the bench we took five berries from the bowl and rubbed the hard yellowish skin off between our fingers.

Step 2

Next, put the coffee berries on a tray in a single layer and put them in the oven for 12 minutes at about 240° C. After the berries have been in the oven for a short time, stir, then wait a little longer and stir again. The berries should pop like popcorn. Pull them out of the oven when they have popped; jumped out of their shell and moved to another spot. Put a fan on to cool the berries down so they won't keep cooking. They should have become darker and bigger.

Step 3

Put the berries in a sifter and sift them until all of the silver sort of wrapping (silverskin) around them has gone. Then quickly put them in a jar and seal it to keep in the freshness. You will need to grind your coffee berries before use.

People like to drink different styles of coffee. If you like espresso coffee, grind the beans very fine. Filter coffee needs a fine to medium grind.

We did enjoy our lovely cup of Yandina coffee, processed and made by Natasha Evans.

Natasha is nine years old, helps her parents with the garden and the poultry, plays netball, enjoys Spanish dancing and loves to catch bugs and explore the property.

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KIDS PAGE

EGGS AND BUNNIES

Eggs and rabbits are both well known symbols of new life. They are two of the classic symbols of Easter and customs and traditions involving eggs and rabbits have been associated with Easter for many centuries.

Decorating Eggs

Hollow Eggs

You will need: eggs, needle, bowl.

Use the needle to poke a small hole in the narrow end of the egg and a slightly larger hole at the other end. Move the pin around to make sure you tear the membrane around the yolk. Now, holding the egg over the bowl, blow through the small hole and the egg will be forced out the larger hole. Rinse the egg out with water. Decorate the shells with paints and varnish (and have scrambled eggs for tea).

Naturally Dyed Eggs

You will need: eggs, vinegar, saucepan, raspberries, blueberries, turmeric, strongly brewed coffee.

Put eggs in the bottom of the saucepan, cover with water and add 1 teaspoon of vinegar. Add one of the natural dye ingredients listed above, depending on the colour you want your eggs. Bring water to the boil then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove the dye ingredient and put the eggs in a bowl. Refrigerate.

Bunnies As Pets

Many pet rabbits are bought without thought of the responsibility, time and patience required. In fact, rabbits and young children are often not a good combination because rabbits are ground animals and do not particularly like being picked up, so they often scratch and tear when picked up. Rabbits are also easily startled so the activity and noise of young kids can often frighten them.

If you think you can commit to the care of a rabbit, here are some things to remember:

★ Sit down and put your rabbit on your lap to pat it (gently).

★ Don't pick him up and hold him - he will be scared and scratch.

★ Parents need to agree to having a rabbit as a pet since they will be the ultimate caregivers. Parents need to teach responsible pet care and enlist help and enthusiasm, but it is considered by some experts that children under about 12 years are too young to have total responsibility for the life of a pet.

★ Just being kept in a cage and thrown food means a rabbit is lonely and sometimes abused. Provide a large hutch that humans can go into with the rabbit and a fenced area safe from dogs and cats, covered on top.

★ Rabbits can be kept inside, but keep electrical wires and poisonous plants out of their reach.

★ Rabbits can live for 8 - 10 years.

Egg Animals

These fantastic creatures are easy to assemble and delicious to eat.

You will need: boiled eggs, toothpicks, carrots, celery, capsicum, cucumbers, cheese, olives, radish, cherry tomatoes, broccoli, corn chips, currants.

Eggosaurus

Place an olive nose on an egg with a toothpick, dig small eye holes and put in currants, surround head with broccoli, make a slit down the line of the back and fill with a row of corn chips, add pieces of celery for legs and a carrot stick tail.

Penguin

Secure a cherry tomato head to an egg with a toothpick, dig small eye holes and put in currants, cut out a cheese beak and cheese feet, cut a dill pickle in half to make wings and secure with toothpicks.

Pig

Make a carrot curl tail and secure to an egg with a toothpick, cut a piece of capsicum for a nose, dig small eye holes and put in currants, cut four cheese cubes for legs and two radish slices will provide ears.

Egg Jokes

Why did the chicken cross the playground?
To get to the other slide.

What day do chickens hate the most?
Fryday.

What do you get when you put a Tasmanian devil in a chicken coop?
Devilled eggs.

IN THE KITCHEN

When the heat leaves you jaded and tired of regular fare, why not try these simple and refreshing Lebanese-inspired recipes? They are perfect for a BBQ outside under a tree in the shade. Serve with a glass of *arak*, the seriously strong Lebanese aniseed drink.

BABA GANOUSH DIP

2 big eggplants, cut in half
3 tbsp tahini (sesame paste)
juice 1 lemon
2 cloves garlic, crushed
½ tsp ground cumin
salt and pepper
1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley for garnish

Prick skins of halved eggplants and place flesh down on a greased tray under a hot grill for 15 minutes, or until skin blackens and flesh is soft. Leave to cool, then peel off skin. Put the flesh and other ingredients in a food processor and blend until a smooth dip-like consistency. Serve cold topped with chopped parsley.

FATTOUSH SALAD

2 small pita breads
juice 2 lemons
1 cucumber, cubed
4 spring onions, finely chopped
4 tomatoes, chopped in small cubes
2 garlic cloves, crushed
3 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, chopped
1 tbsp coriander, finely chopped
4 tbsp olive oil

Toast the bread in the oven until crunchy then cut or break into small pieces. Mix all ingredients except bread in a salad bowl. Add bread just before serving and stir through. Serves 4.

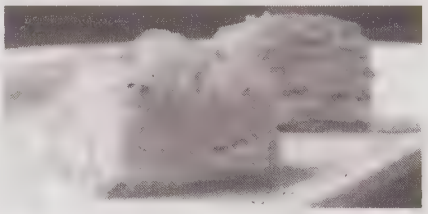
GARLIC CHICKEN WINGS

16 chicken wings, tips trimmed
2 tsp paprika
1 tsp ground cumin
4 cloves garlic, crushed
salt and pepper
juice 2 lemons
5 tbsp olive oil

Taratoor Sauce

2 cloves garlic, crushed
¼ tsp salt
pinch cayenne
1 cup tahini
½ cup lemon juice

Rub chicken wings with paprika and cumin. Mash garlic with salt and pepper



then whisk in lemon and oil until combined. Pour over chicken wings in shallow dish, coat thoroughly. Cook wings for 20 minutes on medium hot BBQ or under grill, basting with marinade, until they are golden brown. To make sauce, mash garlic with spices then whisk tahini and lemon in. Spoon in a strip down each wing and serve hot.

KEFTEH SKEWERS

1 kg lamb mince
1 garlic clove, minced
2 small onions, finely chopped
1 egg
1 tbsp ground cumin
dash cayenne
3 tbsp parsley, chopped
5 mint leaves, chopped

Mix thoroughly in a large bowl using hands. Roll meat into 8 long cylinders then pass a presoaked skewer through each and secure meat to it. Cook kebabs for 20 minutes on BBQ or under grill, until brown on all sides. Serve on rice with lemon wedges and salad.

FALAFEL BALLS

1 cup dried broad beans
1 cup dried chick peas
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 onion, chopped
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tbsp ground cumin
½ cup fresh coriander, chopped
½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
salt and pepper

Soak beans and chick peas in water and bicarbonate of soda overnight. Drain and wash. Place with the rest of the ingredients in a food processor and blend to a soft dough-like mixture. Remove and refrigerate for an hour before use. Divide and shape into small balls, the size of a walnut. Flatten by hand, then shallow-fry in hot oil till golden brown. Serve warm, rolled in pita bread, with salad and taratoor sauce.

LEBANESE RICE

½ cup vermicelli, in 4 cm pieces
2½ cups water
¼ cup butter
1½ cups rice
1½ tsp salt

Soak rice in hot water for 1 hour and drain. Brown vermicelli in butter in pan. Add drained rice. Stir over medium heat 1 minute. Stir in salt and water. Turn to high and bring to boil. Turn heat down to a simmer. Cover and cook for 20 minutes or until rice is tender.

BAKLAVA

2 cups chopped walnuts/pistachios
⅓ cup sugar
1 tbsp rose-water
500 g filo pastry
500 g unsalted butter, melted

Syrup

2 cups sugar
1 cup water
squeeze lemon juice
1 tsp rose-water

Combine nuts, sugar and rose-water. Spread filo layers in a buttered 25 x 35 cm pan, brushing each layer with butter. Halfway through the layering, spread nut mixture in a 2 cm layer. Then continue layering buttered filo on top. Cut in diamond shaped pieces. Bake at 300° C for one hour or until golden brown. Combine sugar, water and lemon juice in saucepan. Boil over medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes or until slightly viscous. Next, add rose-water and bring back to boil. Remove and cool. Pour cool syrup over hot baklava, making sure it is well saturated.

SAY CHEESE

by Pamela Odijk, Bribie Island, Qld.

Most people enjoy cheese, and for those who wish to reduce the amount of meat in their diet, cheese (and other dairy products) and eggs are often the next choice. The nutritional value of all hard cheeses is very similar. They are an excellent source of calcium and phosphorus, very similar to beef fillet or leg of lamb in protein content and a moderate source of vitamin A. Most cheese is, unfortunately, also high in fat, cholesterol and salt, so needs to be consumed in moderation by people with high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Low-fat, low-cholesterol cheeses are increasingly available and are a reasonable, if somewhat bland, substitute.

There are dozens of types and brands of cheeses available, some of which have specific uses. Colour often has nothing to do with the maturity of the cheese, the strength of flavour of a cheese depends on the length of time it has been matured and not its colour. In fact, many cheeses are coloured with vegetable dyes.

Cheese is commonly used in pizza, cheese scones, cheese pancakes, cheese sauce and fondue, but here are some different ways to enjoy it. I have added these recipes to my collection over the years. They are the recipes people ask me for after sampling the product, so I hope you like them too.

SPICY CHEESE SPREAD

This recipe is quick and easy to make, has many variations and is very economical. Compared to commercially prepared spreads this provides about three times as much at half the price.

125 g cream cheese
1 cup firm cheese, grated
1 onion, finely chopped
½ cup chopped herbs: chives, parsley or basil preferred (dried herbs can be used, but reduce the quantity to about 2 tbsp at the most)
1 x 95 g tin of spicy spread such as Safcol Asian Style Shrimp Sambal, curried prawn or smoked oysters in barbecue sauce, or simply a 95 g can of ordinary tuna or salmon with ½ tsp of curry paste added
pepper and salt to taste

Mix ingredients together well and refrigerate in a small bowl for about an hour before serving with cracker biscuits. Save some of the herbs to sprinkle on top for decoration.

Use the same recipe, but substitute 2 sticks celery, finely chopped, and 1 tablespoon tomato sauce in place of the spicy spread for those who prefer milder fare.

RICE AND CHEESE BALLS

3 cups cooked rice
1 cup tasty cheese, grated
1 packet of curry soup mix (or other spicy soup mix)
2 vegetable stock cubes, crumbled
1 egg
1½ cups fresh breadcrumbs
dry breadcrumbs to coat the balls
hot oil for deep frying

Combine the rice, cheese, soup mix, stock, egg (add another egg if necessary to make the mixture combine well). Form into small balls about a heaped teaspoon size and roll in dry breadcrumbs. Refrigerate for about an hour to allow the dry mixtures to expand and hold their shape. Deep-fry in hot oil in a large saucepan until golden. Drain on kitchen towels. Serve with chilli sauce or peanut sauce as a dipping sauce. I actually like the inexpensive house brand of chilli sauce best of all.

CHEESE AND POTATO STICKS

1 cup plain flour
125 g butter
250 g mashed potato
1 egg, beaten
125 g firm cheese, grated
pinch salt
pinch cayenne pepper
sesame seeds

Add the flour and butter to the mashed potato then add the beaten egg. Fold in the grated cheese, salt and cayenne pepper.

Place mixture in a piping bag or a plastic bag and snip out one corner to make a 1 cm hole. Pipe 8 cm lengths onto an oven tray covered with baking paper. Sprinkle sesame seeds over the tops of the sticks and bake at 150° C for about 20 minutes until brown. Serve warm.

SAY CHEESE PIES

Pastry

2 cups flour
pinch cayenne pepper
90 g butter or margarine
1 cup firm cheese, grated
2 – 3 tbsp iced water

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milk to glaze

Filling

1 lge onion, sliced

30 g butter or margarine

2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and chopped

180 g cheddar cheese, diced

1 tbsp parsley, chopped

pepper to taste

Sift flour and cayenne pepper into a bowl and rub through the butter until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add cheese and mix well. Add enough iced water to make a dough. Knead onto a floured board. Divide dough into 2 sections, 2/3 is for the bases and 1/3 is for the pie lids. Roll to about 6 mm thick and cut into 8 rounds to fit patty tins. Prick the base of each and set aside. Preheat oven to 150° C.

Sauté the onion in the butter until transparent. Combine with the remaining filling ingredients and divide filling among the pastry cases. Dampen the edges of the pastry, cover with the remaining pastry cut into rounds for lids. Seal the edges together. Make a small hole in the centre of the top of each small pie. Brush with milk. Bake for about 30 minutes until golden. Serve hot or cold. This recipe makes about 8 pies.

CHEESE DUMPLINGS

2 cups flour

1/2 tsp baking powder

pinch salt & pepper

125 g suet (or substitute margarine)

3/4 cup milk

1 cup firm cheese, grated

Sift dry ingredients into a mixing bowl, add chopped suet or margarine and rub until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add 1 tablespoon of the grated cheese. Stir in the milk and mix with a knife or fork for about 30 seconds. Knead the dough gently on a floured board. Roll dough out thinly and cut into 5 cm diameter rounds. Place about 1 tablespoon of the grated cheese in the centre of each round, wet the edges with cold water and gather up the edges and pull each dumpling together like a bag. Seal well.

Drop the dumplings into a saucepan of boiling tomato soup, then turn down the heat and cook over a low heat for 15 – 20 minutes.

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RE-CREATING SOIL

A number of Victorian companies are working together to create new 'topsoil' from previous waste products. Waste management companies Collex and Cleanaway collect fruit and vegetable waste from restaurants, markets and supermarkets and combine it with wool scourings and fish waste. This is added to sawdust and green waste from collections. The mixture is composted in giant containers, has plastic and other contaminants removed by vacuum suction, and is stored for a time to reduce odour and achieve a good pH. The result is topsoil sold through Wonga Garden Supplies in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

In another partnership, with a sandpit at Yea, fines from the quarrying operation are mixed with sawdust from a local timber mill and chicken manure. This is composted in windrows and produces a soil similar to a river flat loam, most of which is trucked to Melbourne. For more information contact Russell Thompson at Wonga Garden Supplies, ph: 03-9876-2344, or email: info@wonga.au.com

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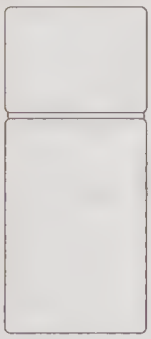

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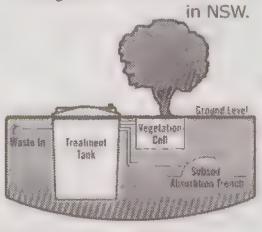

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Handy Trickle Repair System

by Robert Millet, Devonport, Tas.

When I first started using the Israeli drip irrigation system (see GR 154, p64), now commonly called a 'trickle system', it seemed that I was running from one crisis to another: setting up the hoses, fixing leaks, forgetting the parts or tools I needed, and so on. One day as I sat in the garden wondering how to repair the latest stuff-up, I thought of a favourite cartoon: two men sitting at a desk with their feet up and their hands behind their heads, and one says, 'One of these days we must get organised'. Over the years I've found the best way to solve a problem is to forget it for awhile. Go in the house and have a cup of tea or a glass of wine, play with the dog or cat, or have a nap. When you least expect it, the answer will nearly always pop up.

Sure enough, the answer popped up when a friend who works in a café wanted to know if I could use a few empty ice cream containers – long rectangular white plastic trays. She knew I was an ardent recycler. Almost instantly I knew how I'd organise my trickle system parts and tools. That pop-up idea has served me well for many years. Here's how I organise my parts.

THE BOX

A wooden box with a central handle (see photo 1) allows me to put several trays on each side of the handle. Because the trays are tapered, they stack easily. I ended up with a compact arrangement that kept the different parts separate, and yet allowed me to take all the parts I needed to the current trickle irrigation trouble spot.

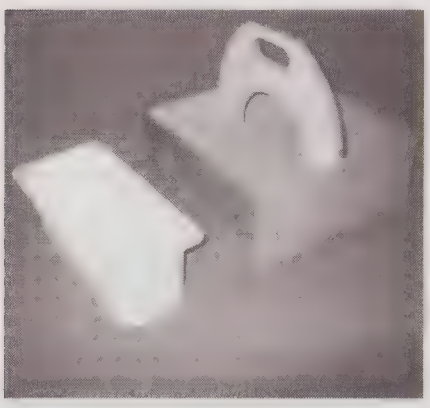
Start by making the box, using the photo as a guide. Allow 158 x 335 millimetres for the trays on each side. Use 12-millimetre plywood for the handle, and make the hand hole about 100 x 30 millimetres, bigger if you have large hands. The handle's shape was chosen to keep the stacks of trays apart, yet keep the bottom of the box available for a small coil of four-millimetre diameter hose (when needed) plus miscellaneous bits. Also, I can drop a full coil of 13-millimetre hose over the handle for a complete package to any job. Allow at least 250 millimetres from the inside of the box's bottom to the hand hole – this will provide adequate room for three trays stacked on each side. The depth of the trickle box should be at least 125 millimetres.

I used 12-millimetre thick wood, but any suitable material from 12 to 25 millimetres is okay. I prefer to use glue and screws, but nails should be fine if driven in at angles. After lots of use in the garden in wet and dry conditions, my box has stood up well without any painting, although now I'd recommend a coating of 50/50 linseed oil and kero. If you plan to paint the box, an undercoating of 50/50 linseed oil and turpentine works better because the kero remains oily.

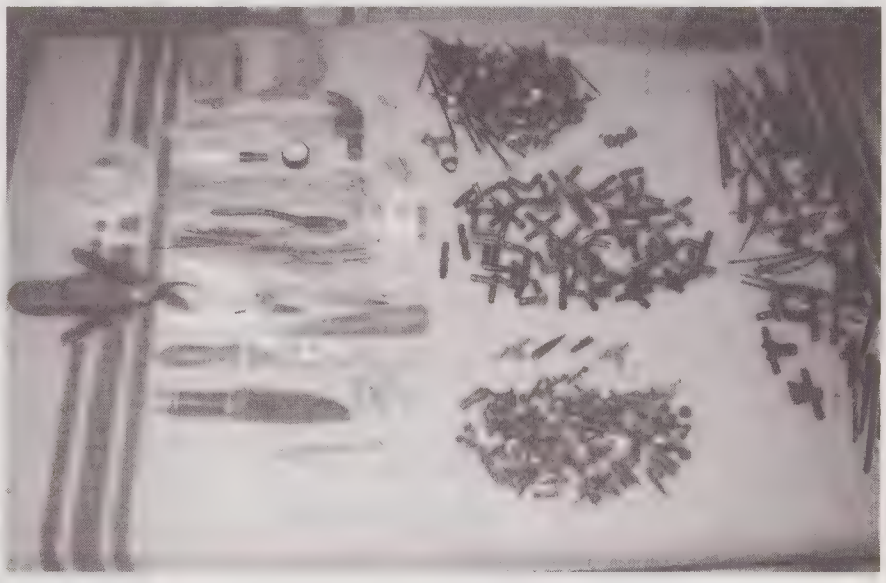
If you have an extensive trickle system, you might want to allow for more trays on each side, so the hand hole in the handle must be raised higher. I recommend the use of plywood for the handle rather than a strap because with a flexible strap you then have the difficult and fiddly problem of keeping each side of the box in balance. To prevent the bottom of the box becoming wet or dirty, I used two 25 x 25-millimetre wood strips as 'feet'.

THE TRAYS

The ends of the ice cream trays are ideal to use as labels. So, if you put all your trickle fittings (elbows, tees, plugs etc) in one tray, then on each corner write 'FITS'. You can now replace



A wooden box with a handle allows easy stacking and carrying of ice cream trays.



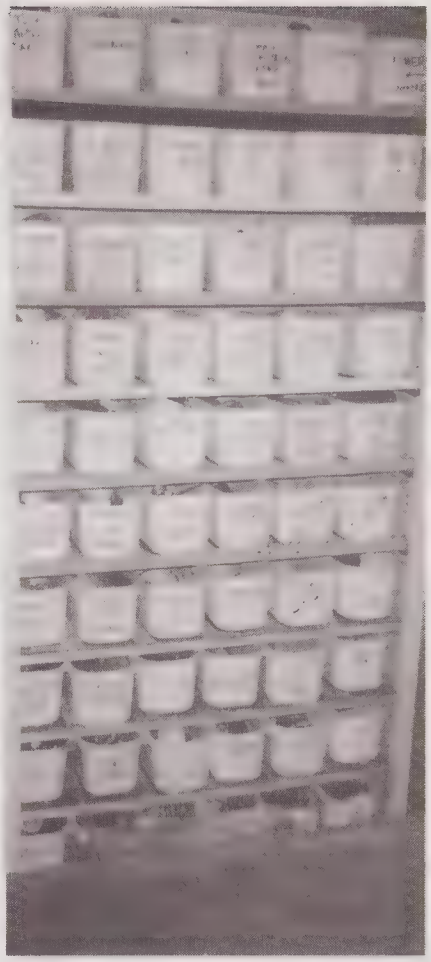
Quite a collection of tools and fittings can accumulate for repairing irrigation systems. An organised system is needed to simplify the job.

the tray in either orientation and still be able to read the contents. Other trays could be used for: tools, drippers, sprays, clamps, miscellaneous bits (valves, filters, riser pipes). After several weeks of use I found that the bottom of the wooden box began to accumulate oddities like drippers to be cleaned, fittings to be recycled, scraps of pipe and wire.

THE TOOLS AND FITTINGS

The tool tray holds not only tools and items needed to work on the trickle system, but also a hammer, trowel, dibbler, plant ties and other miscellaneous items. After all, when you work on the trickle system, you're near plants, so why not do a bit of remedial gardening while you're in the spot? Oddly, the only important tools I do not keep in the tool tray are the hose punches – they go in the tray with the drippers, because four litre per hour drippers are the items I use most. If you live in an area with high water pressure, it pays to connect a filter and a pressure reducer before connecting up each trickle hose system. I once had 13 trickle systems operating off tank/bore water, so I was rather busy cleaning filters and unblocking drippers.

One tool I find indispensable is the small pair of slip-joint pliers. Normally the hose clamps will click together fairly easily. I then like to use the pliers to give the clamp one or two extra clicks. But do not squeeze the clamps too hard – they will crack in winter, and then the hose might work itself off the fitting when you least want it to, such as when you are on vacation. Note also the 'shepherd's hook' metal rods



Ice cream trays are perfect for storing dozens of items in your garage or shed and keeping yourself organised.

near the hammer: these rods are used to anchor the hose whenever needed, so that if you must walk in the garden, you will not trip over it, as one would if a wooden stake were used (as I used to do). The rods are easily removed with the pliers.

Some of the handy items in the tool tray are:

- A small plastic jar of Vaseline to help lubricate the fittings when assembling, especially in cold weather.
- A pair of finger scissors with many uses.
- A roll of cloth tape to tie up things.
- A pair of folding secateurs for that quick prune job.
- Hose clips to nail the trickle hose to a fence or post. I use the cheaper electrical types made for round cables.

EVEN MORE USES

From time to time, a tray might break. Do not throw it away. The plastic makes excellent plant markers and can be written on with a soft pencil or felt pen. Cut the plastic with a stout pair of scissors or snips. I have even used the slippery plastic to make special washers. Over the years I have used these ice cream trays for painting, solvent cleaning, holding disassembled parts of equipment and even to mix small amounts of concrete or patching materials. They are superb for storing all the hundreds of items most garages seem to acquire (see photo at left). I am sure you too will find many uses for these marvellous plastic trays around your slice of paradise.

So, the next time your trickle system suffers a blow-out or blockage, don't fret about past toils and troubles; simply grab your handy trickle repair box, drop a roll of trickle hose over the handle, and whistle your way to the current task. And don't forget to nibble some fruits or vegies and sniff the flowers along the way.

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A SACRED COW

Banning Cats And Dogs From Ecovillages

by Mary Garden, Gin Gin, Qld.

The word ecovillage appeared in the early nineties to describe various alternative communities. Crystal Waters Permaculture Village near Maleny, Queensland, was perhaps the first in Australia to adopt the label in 1994. Since then other communities have chosen to use it or been described as such, though who qualifies or not is entirely subjective, no quantifiable criteria having been established. A number of newer developments have used it in their actual title including Rosneath Farm Ecovillage in WA and Kookaburra Park Ecovillage near Gin Gin, Queensland.

Despite their differences, almost all of these ecovillages have one thing in common: a blanket ban on the keeping of dogs and cats as pets. Not that all members are necessarily happy about or agree with this ruling. Few of these communities have any selection criteria (anybody can go and live there) so they attract a diverse range of people. This includes the full range of avid lovers of dogs and cats through to rabid haters of these animals. There are also those who are indifferent but would not have a problem with permitting pets under special circumstances. Yet, in spite of this diversity there is no freedom of choice. Dogs and cats are not allowed.

From the outset (1974) Moora Moora Co-Operative Community in Healesville, Victoria, has not allowed carnivorous animals like cats and dogs under any circumstances. The reasons were and are environmental, centring on the damage done to native wildlife, particularly by cats. Crystal Waters introduced a similar strict ban in 1998, prohibiting the keeping of dogs and cats by residents and forbidding visitors from bringing them in. Others such as Goolawah (mid-coast NSW), Kookaburra Park, Fryers Forest (Victoria) all have similar rules.

In spite of this widespread ban there are two exceptions – Jarlanbah Permaculture Hamlet near Nimbin, and Rosneath Farm. The fact there are communities that allows such pets is not well known among alternative lifestyle people.

Robyn Francis, well-known permaculture teacher, was the designer of Jarlanbah, NSW's first rural community title established in 1994. Robyn explained: 'The issue of domestic animals has proved to be a painful and divisive issue for many MOs (multiple occupancies) and communities, especially regarding cats and dogs. After extensive discussion on the pros and cons of a "no cats or dogs clause", the solicitor, developer and myself came to agree that such a rule is a knee-jerk reaction. Animals only become a problem if they're not integrated and managed in an appropriate way by their owners.'

Rosneath Farm also decided against the ban. Warwick Rowell says they have a 'tight management approach; no more than two animals, one dog maximum, under control of owner, in house at night and the understanding that if it doesn't work the community will move towards a ban. A careful analysis reveals that cats are easier to manage than dogs.'

Then why have the majority of ecovillages banned cats and dogs? Unfortunately, some of Australia's more vocal and outspoken anticat and dog lobbyists have influenced and misled a lot of people. John Wamsley (formerly of Earth Sanctuaries) became a public figure a decade ago, conducting public crusades against cats with a cat pelt draped over him. He has come out with some extreme, if not offensive, statements, such as that 'It has been proven beyond all doubt that cats are the number one problem in regard to Australia's loss of wildlife', and that 'The only good cat is a flat or dead cat'. Another vocal anticat campaigner, zoologist Dr David Paton, also gave figures (since called into question) purporting that cats kill 3.8 billion animals and birds annually.

Such lobbying has led to the 'demonising' of these animals, especially cats. I was appalled when a permaculture teacher told me in 1995 that the only use for cats was as '*mulch*

or on a barbecue'. Former ecovillage resident Brenda Ramsey recently wrote: 'Having been out of Crystal Waters for 1½ years now and an owner of two gorgeous cats, I am absolutely floored by the comments from some of the Crystal Waters people who've visited. They have such unfounded venom for cats. One man, an avid permaculturist, said, "I'll sneak over when you're out one day and hang 'em one by one". Another said: "The cats and environment are mutually exclusive, you can't have the cats and the environment as well".'

To appease those who perhaps would like a pet, there are those who bring up the utopian idea of quolls and other Australian native animal species. Wildlife experts have rejected this idea because, while domestic pets have been selected over thousands of generations to make them suitable as companions, native animals have not. They can be aggressive at maturity and susceptible to stress.

While at first newcomers to ecovillages might be excited about the newness of being around more wildlife, the honeymoon phase soon passes when snakes slither into bedrooms and baths, kangaroos menace and sometimes even attack the unwary, possums scuttle over roofs, entering them wherever possible, native rats harvest grapes at the end of the verandah and bandicoots demolish the vegetable garden. It often becomes impossible to grow vegetables without adequate fencing to keep the wildlife out! Without cats and dogs, vermin can become a major problem, particularly where chemicals and poisons are also banned.

But what about damage done to wildlife by cats and dogs? According to the Australian Conservation Foundation and reports from the CSIRO, the biggest threat to biodiversity is not introduced animals but habitat degradation from the clearing of land for farmland and buildings. It is because of this destruction of native habitats that wildlife is reduced. With less prey available, the impact of pest species, particularly foxes, is much greater because the pests are more adaptable and better able to survive on cleared land. Even in uncleared or revegetated land the predatory habits of cats or dogs are not nearly as detrimental as those of other foreign species such as foxes, rabbits, cane toads and sparrows. Some studies have indicated that cars on our roads kill more birds than do cats!

Regardless, dogs and cats will prey when they are allowed to roam freely or have gone feral. But the feral problem arises directly from irresponsible ownership. Well-managed cats and dogs are neutered, constrained from wandering by fencing and kept indoors at night.

Even though the fundamental reason for this blanket ban on cats and dogs is an environmental one, there are other reasons. Bob Rich from Moora argues that the use of resources by society on pet food seems obscene in a world where millions starve. However, pet food comes from sources most of which are deemed unfit for human consumption, for example old dairy cows and poultry, wild pigs and discarded offal from meat works. It is not viable economically and would also be an insult to send this sort of inferior meat to Third World countries when there are good quality foodstuffs available in the world, especially in the surplus stocks of Europe and the USA.

A more valid reason for not wanting dogs or cats in communities is the concern over possible mismanagement of pets. On a recent visit to Jarlanbah, while talking to some of the residents, I found it interesting that complaints about dogs barking or 'pooping' did not arise. Complaints have been over dogs 'on the loose' (straying) and, some years ago, chasing other animals such as hens. This is in spite of a by-law stipulating that if a resident keeps an animal (of any species) they should ensure it is properly provided for and confined or restricted to the lot.

As can be expected in a diverse community, what are minor incidents to some are major dramas to others.

With careful management it is possible to keep pets and conserve native animals.

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While for a few Jarlanbah residents the issue of 'dogs and cats' is constantly simmering and sometimes boils over, to others it is simply a nonissue. One resident remarked that even if her cat does on the rare occasion catch a bird, it is invaluable to keep mice and rats at bay. It is interesting, if not amusing, that apart from the few who are opposed to dogs and cats being in the community at all, there is even a little niggling tension between some cat and dog lovers. One bemoaned the fact that in his view cats do more damage but are more 'invisible' compared to dogs that are 'in your face'.

Several residents commented that compared with other problems cats and dogs were doing much more good than harm. The big problem for them is how to deal with those few members who have the need to control others and the community, to impose their views on others. These few make issues out of a lot of things, including cats and dogs.

It seemed odd to me that only one dog owner has fenced his lot because most of the problems would be resolved if owners simply fenced part of their lots. Now that dogs and cats are such an integral part of the way of life at Jarlanbah the real challenge is to find ways to implement the various guidelines that are decided upon. It is common for alternative communities to be reluctant to enforce by-laws through the 'court system' because this could be seen as an admission of failure. One resident at Jarlanbah commented that 'this community simply does not have the heart to go down that track'. However, even though most of us are fairly self-regulated and don't need rules to behave decently towards each other, there are always the few who seem to require codes of behaviour – regulations which need to be enforced.

If a community decides to follow in the footsteps of Jarlanbah and allow the keeping of dogs and cats as pets, there obviously needs to be very clear guidelines for their management so that the rights of neighbours are respected. There also need to be ways to enforce those policies. It might also be necessary to have, for example, a system of conditional licences, perhaps a restriction to various breeds of dogs

When controlled inside or in wire runs, cats can be kept without harming native birds.

favouring those that are less aggressive, a requirement for dog obedience training, the use of enclosed outdoor spaces for a cat.

The real difficulty with any prohibition is that it becomes an irresistible challenge to break, as nearly all communities have discovered! Here at Kookaburra Park one resident flaunted our by-law and kept a small dog for almost a year – a situation that caused all sorts of dramas and tensions. As far as I was concerned the dog itself was not a problem; I never saw or heard it and the family took it outside the community daily to exercise it. Finally, the owner had enough and moved to nearby Gin Gin with the dog and left her husband and children behind. This situation could have been handled differently if we had a different by-law, especially one that at least allows the keeping of pets under special circumstances.

What is really interesting is that when people leave ecovillages often one of the first things they do is acquire a dog or a cat. It has been clearly established that pets have an overall beneficial effect on the physical and psychological health of their keepers. Australia has the highest rate of pet ownership in the world with 83 percent of Australians having had a pet at some time. In Jarlanbah it is telling that out of the 26 established households 11 keep cats or dogs.

When the idealism, not only about 'native wildlife' but also other aspects of community living, wears off, residents can be left with a sense of loss over past pets. Wildlife is no substitute for what they have had to give up. Chris from Kookaburra Park says that they had to give up their two darling West Highland Terriers, the oldest of which was 14 and had been with the family since their children were babies. Brenda, looking back, is surprised she opted to go to Crystal Waters in the first place if this meant giving her dog Gizmo away. The ban to her always felt like an imposition. 'I don't understand why the minimal damage (if any when managed properly) a cat or dog can do is an issue compared to what some people do to each other.'

A total ban does more than deny people the pleasures and benefits of pet ownership. It also distracts residents from the need to look at other factors that impact on wildlife and prevents the development of a management plan for the whole ecosystem and *all* animals, native and introduced, pets and pests.

I believe that cats and dogs have become convenient scapegoats for wildlife depletion due to human activities and this view has seeped into ecovillages. I would have thought that if pet access leads to happier people then that would lead to a more contented and less stressed community. If communities really want to be serious about biodiversity and slant their ecology towards native wildlife, then instead of a blanket ban on dogs and cats they need to get serious about trapping foxes and rabbits and to reduce the cane toad

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population. These are major threats to native wildlife and they are proliferating in many communities. Fewer exotic trees and a wider variety of local native trees (not the massive plantings of the pest weed torelliana, which litters ecovillages in Queensland and NSW!) could also be planted to the great benefit of native animals.

With any controversial issue it is very difficult to soften a hardened mindset, because mindsets protect cherished beliefs and prejudices. One of the founders of permaculture, David Holmgren, wrote in the *International Journal of Permaculture* (No 51, 1994), 'In permaculture it is essential that we continually question our most self-evident beliefs if we are to avoid dogmatic beliefs and be successful in establishing sustainable systems'. In response to Holmgren's remark, permaculture teacher Mal McKenna comments: 'Nowhere is this challenge greater than in trying to balance the competing desires for sustainable systems and domestic pets'.

I believe though that the real problem, the real challenge, is not dogs and cats but human beings. Dogs and cats can be managed easily. What can't be managed easily are human beings – their fears, their lack of responsibility and their need for 'sacred cows'. How to deal with these human factors is the biggest challenge to ecovillages and to those who seek a 'better way' of living.

Mary Garden (resident of Kookaburra Park) has visited, played and worked at, and also lived in alternative communities on and off since the early 1970s.

RECYCLING RUNS RIOT

Barbecues

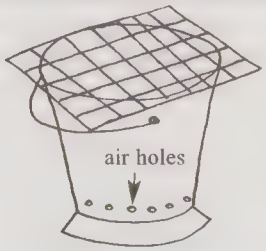
by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Some time ago I saw a television program with the cook Kingsley Harriot offering some options for barbecues. All the alternatives were fuelled by the usual charcoals and fire starters and all seemed to work well. A wheelbarrow, a 20-litre drum, a biscuit tin and an old bucket, all made of metal, were suggested. Chicken wire or a cake rack kept the food off the coals. A baking dish over the top gave a steaming barbecue kettle effect. Light the coals in the metal container, put the chicken wire or cake rack over it, then the food on the rack.

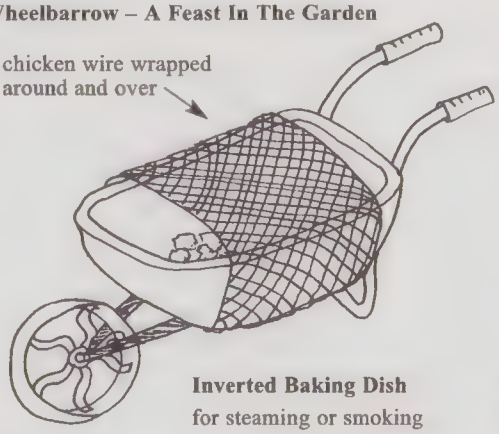
Should fat dripping from the meat cause the fire to flare up, simply spray it with water from a trigger spray bottle otherwise the meat can burn.

Smaller metal containers need holes in the bottom to allow air to circulate around the fire. Now you can recycle all those old metal containers with rusted out bottoms.

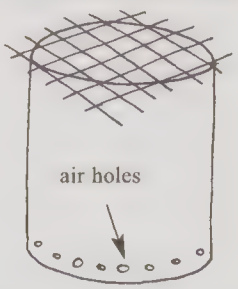
Metal Bucket and Cake Rack



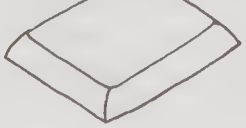
Wheelbarrow – A Feast In The Garden



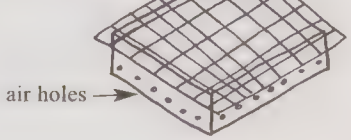
Drum and Cake Rack



Inverted Baking Dish
for steaming or smoking



Biscuit Tin and Cake Rack
for small meals



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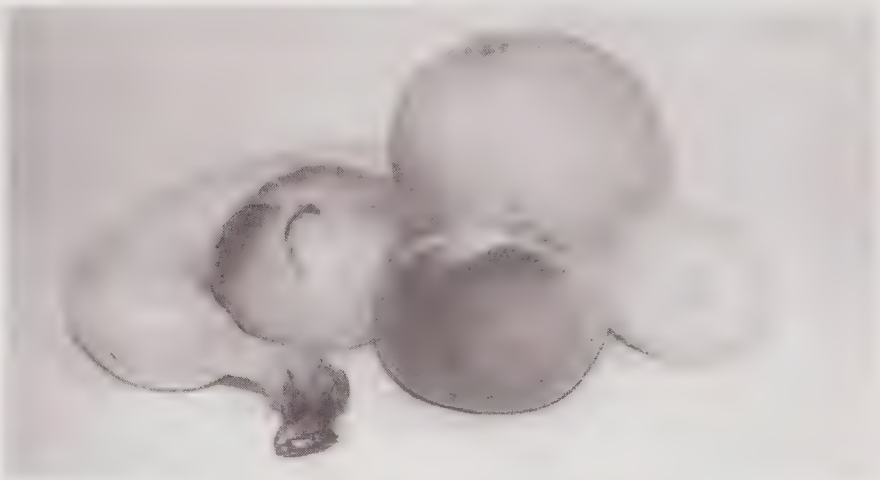
Potassium Power

by Isabell Shipard, Nambour, Qld.

In researching the nutritional composition of food plants, an essential mineral to the body, potassium, has come to my attention. A number of research studies and natural health books emphasise the importance of potassium to health and wellbeing.

Research findings suggest that cancer cells cannot live in a potassium-rich environment. So it seems to me that, if we find out which foods are rich in potassium, we can use this research finding to help prevent cancer. With cancer and other debilitating diseases rife, we need to understand why potassium is so important and what action it has in the body.



Fruits are a good source of potassium.

THE POTASSIUM SODIUM LINK

In the body, potassium plays a crucial function in fluid balance, the mechanism by which cells are nourished and cleansed. Potassium is the principal positively charged element in fluids inside the cells, while sodium is the principal positively charged element of fluids outside the cells. The right balance is extremely important to the cells receiving nourishment, so they can do their work. This includes removing toxic wastes, maintaining correct blood pressure, removing fluids and preventing pain and disease.

Potassium deficiency is widespread, with many factors, like stress, overprocessed foods, climatic conditions, and diarrhoea in our daily lives accentuating the problem. Once we understand the potassium/sodium balance, and see what happens when it is not performing properly – loss of energy, illness – we can take steps to prevent and reverse disease.

POTASSIUM AND HEALTH

Dr Max Gerson, in his many years of research on cancer, believed that the starting point for all illness, cancer included, is the imbalance of sodium and potassium, usually too much sodium and too little potassium. This imbalance, he said, results in serious disturbances in body chemistry, for not only is potassium an important nerve conductor, it also acts as a catalyst to many body enzymes.

Gerson claimed that if we correct the balance by eating potassium-rich raw foods, which can invigorate and cleanse the body because they improve respiration at the cell level, we can mobilise the white blood cells which fight and destroy cancer cells. Ideally, the food should be organically grown. In artificially fertilised foods, the sodium content is higher and the potassium content is lower. Then when we cook food, most of the potassium is leeched out; besides, when we cook or process food it is often flavoured with massive amounts of salt, resulting in excess sodium. Drugs, coffee, sugar, alcohol and excess stress may also cause imbalance.

Potassium has a number of functions in the body :

- Besides being vital to the potassium/sodium balance in and around cells, potassium is important to pH balance and correct water balance.
- It combines with iron to utilise oxygen for the cells and supports healthy heart action.
- It is the major mineral for healing.
- It is vital for the maintenance and repair of muscular tissues, for muscle contraction (including contraction of the heart muscles), and the muscles involved with digestion. Considering we have 650 muscles, which make up 40 percent of our body weight, it makes sense to feed them what they need so they can hold us together well
- It normalises heart action, liver and lung function.
- It assists in elimination of blood impurities, and stimulates the kidneys to eliminate toxic wastes.
- It is essential for digestion of carbohydrates and glucose production and acts as an energy source.
- It promotes healthy skin, lubricating and feeding the sebaceous glands and mucous membranes.

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• It is essential to mental function and nerve impulses. According to the biochemical philosophers who are the followers of Schuessler, no new brain cells can be made without potassium.

• It retards the ageing process by improving blood and oxygen circulation.

BEST PLANT SOURCES

The best plants to grow and use regularly that benefit the body's potassium levels are salad mallow and sweet fruit root. These two plants were analysed in Queensland laboratories from plants grown on our farm. We had them analysed as we believed they both had valuable nutritional benefits.

The salad mallow is a hardy annual that grows to one metre and will grow in any climate. The chlorophyll-rich glossy green leaves are over 20 percent protein and can be used fresh, lightly cooked or dried. It has 3680 milligrams of potassium per 100 grams.

The sweet fruit is a hardy deciduous perennial that grows to one metre plus, and will grow in any climate. The tuber is very tasty, crisp, juicy, sweet and refreshing. It is over nine percent protein with a good balance of essential amino acids. Besides its exceptional potassium content (2230 milligrams per 100 grams), it also has a high content of calcium, iron, magnesium and fructose.

The following list of foods and their potassium levels has been taken from several sources including *Composition and Facts about Foods* by Ford Heritage and *Nutritional Herbology* by Mark Pederson. I noted that several of the foods differed in analysis, no doubt due to different soils and fertilisers being used for growing. But the following will certainly give a guide to some of the best sources of potassium. The daily recommended intake of potassium is between 2000 and 6000 milligrams.

POTASSIUM COMPOSITION OF FOODS

Food	mg/100g	Food	mg/100g	Food	mg/100g
Peppermint	2260	Rosemary	1340	Date	648
Feverfew	2250	Chamomile	1320	Dried fig	640
Carrot	2200	Mullein	1320	Avocado	604
Scullcap	2180	Fennel	1310	Horseradish	564
Vine leaves	2018	Cornsilk	1220	Taro	514
Red clover	2000	Marshmallow	1210	Spinach	470
Peach	1940	Alfalfa	1200	Millet	430
Ginger	1890	Dandelion	1200	Chicory	420
Chickweed	1840	Garlic	1180	Potato skin	407
Pineapple	1820	Licorice	1140	Wheat	390
Stevia	1780	Pennyroyal	1050	Plantain	385
Nettle	1750	Banana	1030	Kale	378
Orange	1700	Fenugreek	1020	Pumpkin	340
Burdock	1680	Pigeon pea	981	Shallot	334
Comfrey	1590	Dried apricot	979	Elderberry	300
Equisetum	1560	Prunes	940	Celeriac	300
Lemon	1470	Sunflower seeds	920	Cauliflower	295
Onion	1380	NZ spinach	795	Watercress	282
Capsicum	1350	Parsley	727	Asparagus	278
Chilli	1350	Sesame seeds	725	Lettuce	264

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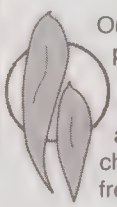

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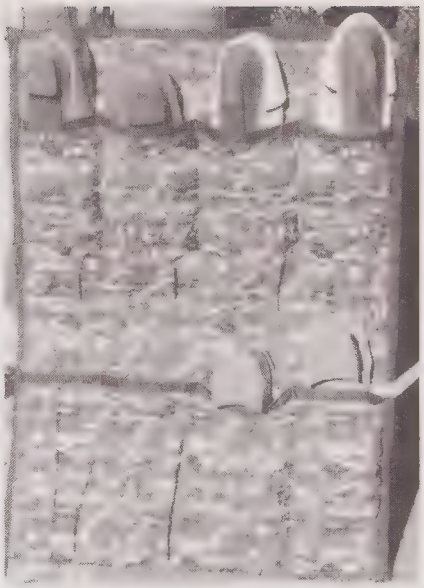
Shoe Tidy

by Dianne Jackson, Valhalla.



A shoe tidy is essential for any space-challenged family. This useful item can be made as an attractive feature in colourful fabric and hung on a wall, perhaps inside an en suite dressing room. Choose an appropriate print for a child's room.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- attractive sturdy cotton material cut as follows:
  - back – one 50 x 70 cm
  - front – two 38 x 50 cm
  - pocket strip – two 25 x 60 cm
- binding, approximately 4 m x 7.5 cm
- stiff cardboard cut to suit
- sewing machine (but can be stitched by hand)
- thread and sewing requisites
- iron for pressing

PROCEDURE

Bind top 50-centimetre edge of each pocket strip. With pocket strip wrong side up, pin binding to top long edge and stitch a narrow seam. Fold binding over to front then turn under and stitch along folded hem.

Repeat with second pocket strip.

Fold each strip in half then half again (four folds) along 50-centimetre side and press folds with iron. Also make similar folds on both fronts and press.

Take a front piece, lay one pocket strip on top, and both right sides up. Align raw edges at sides and bottom. Attach along sides.

Match folds on strip and front. Stitch pocket strip to front piece along each fold. Backstitch over binding at top of pocket strip.

Fold soft box pleat at bottom of each pocket and tack in place (see diagram 1).

Repeat with remaining front and pocket strip pieces.

Place finished top pocket unit over bottom pocket unit, right sides facing as shown in diagram 2. Stitch together. Press completed front section with iron.

Pin and sew strip of binding wrong side up along bottom edge of finished front, but do not turn to back and hem at this stage.

With back piece wrong side up and finished front right side up on top, align and pin together along edges. Set aside.

To make hanging tabs, cut 30 centimetres of binding. Fold long edges to centre, fold to centre once more and stitch both folds together. Cut in half.

Fold each strip in half. Tack one at front top edge over first quarter fold of shoe tidy. Tack second folded strip on three-quarter fold at top front edge.

Bind top of shoe tidy (as previously described). Pin and bind sides, allowing two centimetres each to be folded and stitched to back.

Fold back top hanging tabs, now stitched and held under top binding. Stitch down as shown in diagram 3.

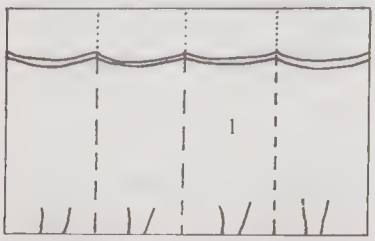
Cut cardboard insert to fit and slide inside bag through opening at bottom of tidy.

Turn binding at bottom edge under to back and hem.

Sit back and admire your handywork!

I found other items could be more conveniently stored in the pockets. One pocket now holds shoe-cleaning gear, another contains my special silk socks where 'he' can't find them. I found this shoe tidy so useful that I made a second one and have made several for friends.

Diagram 1



Two front pocket strips attached at sides. Each pocket stitched along matched folds. Box pleat at base of each pocket.

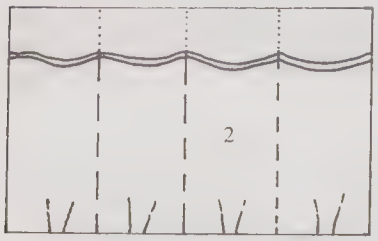
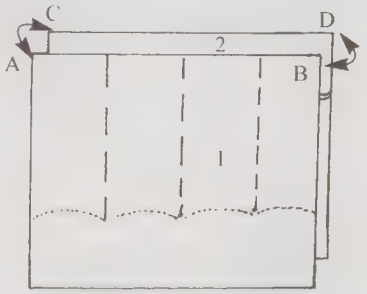
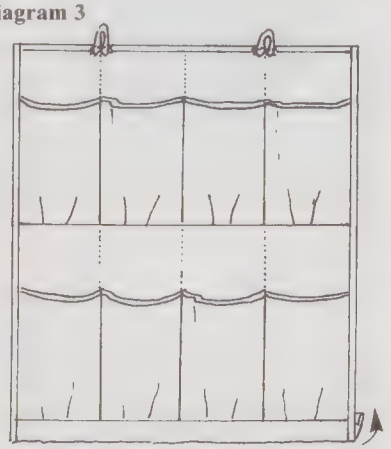


Diagram 2



Bottom front unit right side up. Top front unit wrong side up with top edge at bottom. Align edges A – B and C – D, stitch this edge.

Diagram 3



Tabs are attached on folds at top edge under binding. Bottom edge has binding attached but not hemmed yet. Side bindings attached. Card insert cut to fit and in place. Bottom binding turned to back and hemmed.

WHAT'S ON IN SUMMER

SEE GRASS ROOTS!

Come and see your favourite magazine at the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo, on from 13 to 15 February, 2004. Grass Roots will be selling the latest edition and the usual specials such as discounted back issues and books. While there, you could always go and see the 650 exhibitors presenting the world's best agricultural technology, farm machinery, plants, products and services. There will be owner building displays and alternative stock like alpacas, Boer goats and emus. Seymour is one hour north of Melbourne, Victoria, via the Hume Highway. Call 03-5799-1211 for information.

CAN YOU CUT IT?

Shave or colour your hair for a very good cause on 12 and 13 March. The Leukemia Foundation is hoping to raise $10 million for research for a leukemia cure and to assist with patient support. To join in the fun and help them out, contact 1800-500-088 or visit www.worldsgreatestshave.com Remember, it will grow back.

HANDY RETREAT

The ever busy Handspinners and Weavers Guild of Victoria is holding a retreat at Harrietville from 26 to 28 March. Activities include glitzy knitting, Japanese braiding, fine felting, colour mixing and fibre blending. The guild is also holding a Golden Anniversary Exhibition from 16 to 28 April, with entries closing on 12 March. Those interested in going to the retreat or exhibiting a handspun or woven item should contact the guild at 12-20 Shakespeare St, Carlton North 3054.

ABC LIVE SHOW GOES NATIONAL

ABC Gardening Australia Live is expanding to add Victoria and SA to NSW and Queensland as destinations. The travelling garden festival offers presentations and advice from ABC gardening experts, extensive show gardens, plant displays, and a wide array of exhibitors, many organic or enviro friendly. The first event will be held at RNA Showgrounds, Brisbane, from 2 to 4 April, before moving on to Sydney in early September, Melbourne in late September and Adelaide in March 2005.

Try mudbrick building in Nowra, NSW.

RUG HOOKING IN SA

The Handspinners and Weavers Guild of SA is holding a number of courses in 2004, dates yet to be finalised. If you are interested in learning rug hooking, rainbow dyeing or even inkle weaving, give the guild a call on 08-8352-4843 to get more information.

SUSTAINABLE WIMMERA

In GR 160 we mentioned the Sustainable Living Festival on at Federation Square, Melbourne, from 13 to 15 February. Now Wimmera dwellers have their own! The festival will be running on 20 and 21 March at the University of Melbourne's Longerenong Campus at Dooen, near Horsham. It aims to provide information sharing and networking opportunities for people in the area interested in sustainable living, and will feature lectures and hands-on exhibits with a practical, local emphasis. Contact 03-5383-6368.

START SAVING IN QLD

The Seed Savers Network is a nonprofit group of like-minded individuals who are passionate about saving our plant heritage. Membership benefits include field days, social seed swaps, info gatherings, newsletters and access to nonhybrid local seeds and plants. There is now a Seed Savers Up North group for those in FNQ. Interested sorts in the Tablelands area should contact Annie, 07-4096-6595, or those around Cairns, Jane 'Many Leaves', 0413-800-022. There are now over 50 local seed savers groups; to find one in your area call 02-6685-7560 or visit website www.seedsavers.net

WA CORAL ON SHOW

Those lucky enough to be in WA over February and March should check out some wonders of nature, such as the turtles hatching at Gascoyne, and the coral spawning in March at protected Ningaloo Reef, where dense clouds of brilliantly coloured coral polyps are released. Contact WA Tourism in the area, Carnarvon, 08-9941-1146.

ORGANIC MILESTONE

The Organic Agriculture Association is celebrating 20 years of promoting conservation farming methods on 13 and 14 March. This will coincide with the Grow Organic biennial seminar, with speakers, workshops, demonstrations, delicious organic food and more. Head to Camp Coolamatong on the Banksia Peninsula near Bairnsdale, Victoria, or contact Robyn on 03-5157-1586.

MAKE MINE MUD

Make It Mudbricks is holding a workshop on 27 and 28 March covering theoretical and practical aspects of mudbrick building, and visiting homes and getting dirty. Cost is $250, location is West Nowra, NSW. Call Peter Jirgens on 02-4446-0140 or visit www.makeitmudbricks.com.au

TASSIE LOCAL PRODUCE

Tassie currently has some great farmers' markets, held fortnightly at Burnie, Wynyard and Deloraine. For details, look up www.farmersmarkets.org.au

BIODYNAMIC FUNDING

Curious about what's involved in changing from conventional to biodynamic farming? Two weekend farm workshops being held in SA in early February are being partially sponsored by FarmBi$. Contact Biodynamic AgriCulture Australia on 02-6655-0566.

THE AUSTRALORP
A Great General-Purpose Fowl

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

If you're after a placid purebred, the Australorp is an excellent choice. Aside from being remarkably good natured, it's one of just a handful of chicken breeds developed in this country and so is suited to our climatic conditions. The Australorp is now largely an exhibition breed, but for much of last century was a highly sought after laying fowl. Commercial strains were maintained by CSIRO and other research institutions until the early 1990s. The offspring of these would be perfect for GR landholders or small-scale free-range activities.

POPULAR AUSSIE FOWL

Australorps were kept by farmers' wives and commercial producers alike: I can still recall my own grandmother's 200-bird flock. Boxes of eggs were taken to a nearby town for sale and young cockerels were grown out, despatched and plucked on Saturday evenings to meet orders from local farm workers' families for Sunday lunch. It was a boon keeping a general-purpose breed because extra shillings were earned from the plump table cockerels as well as the eggs. Where Australorps were kept and selected solely for egg output, financial success was guaranteed. The hen 'Lady Werribee' achieved a world record in the 1930s by laying 338 eggs in 52 weeks under test conditions for her Victorian owner.

Australorps dominated laying records worldwide until the early 1940s. After this they contributed to the make-up of the Astra-White cross, an early commercial layer, and they are still part of the breeding programs for some commercial stock.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Australorp derived from the Black Orpington, a breed created in England in the 1880s to meet the needs of the working man. Its creator, William Cook, crossed several purebreds to produce a hardy, economical bird that would lay very well. He bred it with black plumage so the breed would look smart even in grimy industrial areas.

Australorps are broad, deep-bodied birds with a distinct sweeping curve along their backline.

Stock arrived in Australia in 1887. Known here as Black Utility Orpingtons, they enjoyed success on the show bench and as layers, their adaptability and placid nature making them serious competition to Leghorns and to the brown-egg-laying Plymouth Rocks and Wyandottes. Poultry farming was expanding rapidly and, to facilitate growth, laying trials were established to evaluate the performance of pure breeds.

Black Utility Orpingtons were among the top performers. During the second decade of the 20th century egg output improved dramatically when they were surreptitiously infused with Chinese (now called Australian) Langshan, a practice that was continued for decades. The legacy of this included tightened plumage, so it sat closer on the body, as well as the boosted egg lay.

When specimens of Black Utility Orpingtons were taken back to England in 1921 the English looked at them and decided they were unchanged from the original birds that went out to Australia. However, their own Black Orpingtons had been selectively bred for softer, looser feathering to ensure show success and had become more like the Cochin than Cook's Orpington. The Australian imports were fantastic layers, unlike the English exhibition Orpingtons, and to distinguish the two types the imports were given the name Austral-Orps, later condensed to a single word. This name was applied in Australia after 1929.

RECOGNISING AUSTRALORPS

If you're at an auction, how do you distinguish purebred stock from black plumaged commercial layers? Australorps appear impressively large. Adult males will weigh from 3.60 – 4.10 kilograms and females 2.75 – 3.20 kilograms. Pullets and cockerels are a little lighter, but still considerably bigger than the crossbred. Australorps have a deep broad body, a well-rounded breast and a sweeping curve along the backline from neck to tail. The crossbred has a flattish back and lacks

depth and breadth. The tails on Australorps are distinct; both sexes have full, compact tails carried relatively high, and there are no long flowing sickles on the males as commonly seen on many roosters. A crossbred has a much longer tail that is carried lower.

The black plumage of Australorps has a rich, beetle-green sheen whereas crossbreds lack this sheen or may display a purplish-blue hue. Combs on the purebred are medium sized, as are wattles, and the female's comb shows no tendency to fold over, a characteristic likely to be found on crossbreds. Eyes are black and prominent, but on the crossbred they will be orange-red. Legs and toes are black and the soles of feet white. This is a lot to remember, but you will be surprised how many points will come to mind when you're looking at actual birds.

WHY KEEP AUSTRALORPS?

The chief reason backyarders choose Australorps is their placid nature; it's rare to hear of a bad-tempered bird. The hens are even sweet natured when broody; they'll grumble if you put a hand under them, but will be disinclined to peck and bring blood. For this reason they make great surrogate mothers, and owners can buy a dozen day-old chicks and slip them under their broody without any trouble.

The disadvantages associated with the breed are the highish feed bill and low egg output. A big body requires plenty of tucker for maintenance, and the fantastic laying ability of the old days has been lost as breeders have concentrated on show qualities. However, if you can get hold of a laying strain, as distinct from an exhibition one, you will be rewarded with loads of eggs.

Another disadvantage is the hens' propensity to go broody. In the hot weather the hens frequently go clucky and so household eggs become scarce. If broodies are removed straight away and put into a wire pen with feed and water, they quickly return to lay.

If you don't need lots of eggs and you want a breed that is attractive and friendly, you'll love Australorps. They will happily wander around the backyard or farm, or cope with life in a pen. They are not flighty and, if anything, can be a nuisance underfoot, especially when you are playing or eating outdoors. I always refer to them as BBQ birds, not because they're tasty on the burner, though I'm sure they are, but if you turn your back for a minute they're mingling with the guests and passing around the food. They're laid back, a tad lazy and real larrikins – an Aussie breed for sure.

OBTAINING STOCK

You can buy large or miniature Australorps and the first port of call is your closest poultry club or agricultural society. If that doesn't bring results, the Australorp Club of Australia should be able to help. Contact: Secretary, Ross Summerell, PO Box 70, Tamborine 4270, or check out their website htttp://australorps.tripod.com

Day-olds can be ordered from Richard Barter, of S F Barter & Sons, who has maintained the old-style laying strain for over 60 years. Phone 02-9672-1399 for price, availability and freight details.

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EARTHWORM ADVICE

Earthworm aficionado David Murphy has come to our aid with advice on a range of readers' letters.

I thought I might take up your offer of some advice regarding worm farming. I've got the commercial variety of worm farm, which I purchased about three to four years ago from the local council, and I'm not overly pleased with its progress. I'm a bit disappointed that I'm still in the first 'working tray' and haven't had any castings for the vegies. I've had lots of liquid fertiliser that has been great, but I'm unsure if the lack of castings is normal or not. I feed them about once a week (in fact I even used to cook mushed-up scraps for them!) and keep them moist and covered with newspaper. The worms go through stages of being quiet and active, and I'm concerned that something might be going wrong with them sporadically. I've also recently had a bit of an infestation with slugs, but I've put that down to the dry weather; the worm farm's the only moist place left in the garden. Any hints would be much appreciated.

Wendy Robinson

I guess what you've got is one of the stacking basket systems, with a catchment tank on the bottom. Can I open by saying that I definitely don't like these and would score them at 3/10 if I was in a good mood. Your problem is that even after three to four years you don't have sufficient in the bottom basket to warrant adding the top basket. To fix this, you simply need to feed more. Consider also, do you have a sufficiently large worm population? One of these wormeries should have at least one kilo of mature healthy worms.

The presence of the slugs suggests you have the system sufficiently moist, so, given the food, it should work okay.

I can't suggest why the worms should wax and wane in their level of activity without an actual physical inspection. A feature of worms is that their action is constant, provided feed is supplied regularly, they have adequate moisture, are not disturbed, and have a constant temperature and constant darkness.

However, there is one mistake you're making in cooking the food, and this could hold part of the answer. Worms don't eat this food. They eat the bacteria that is eating the food and, in ingesting the bacteria, some of the food goes in with it. It's the bacteria and fungi that are the preferred food of the worms. So, the more you cook it, the less the bacterial population. If you feed cooked food, the worms' activity will diminish until the bacterial population becomes established. Leave it raw (unless it's already cooked) and put it through a food blender to reduce the particle size. Purée it! The smaller the particle size, the greater the surface area and the higher the population of bacteria able to come to dinner. Under good conditions, bacteria will double in population every 20 minutes.

I suppose also, as is usually the case, you were advised to start the worm farm with 1000 worms. A kilo or 4000 would have been better! These worm farms will house two kilograms, depending on the volume of food waste being fed.

The golden rule in working with worms is that you need to think like a worm: 'If I were a worm, would I like what I'm doing?'

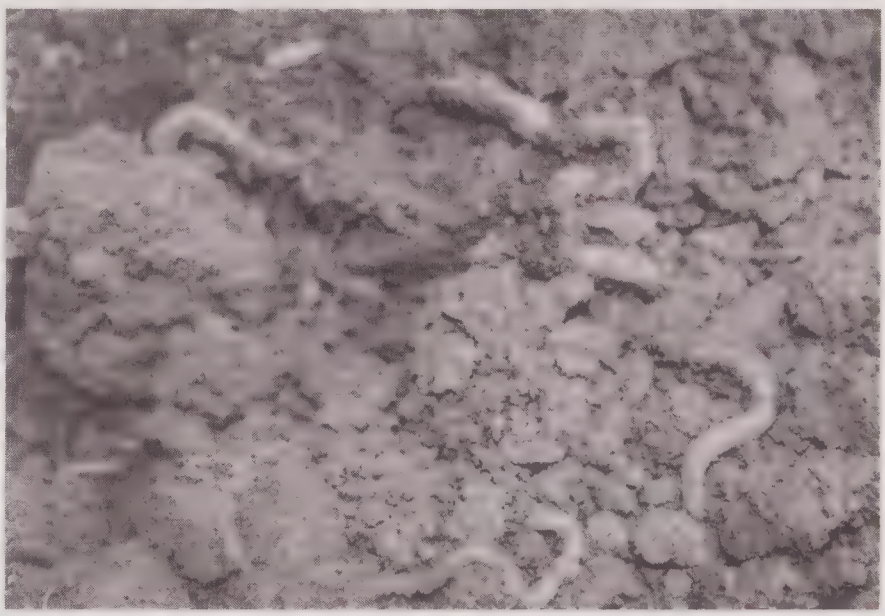
In a compost bin, how do you know what quantities of various materials to use so that the carbon-nitrogen ratio is correct?

Simone Groves

While this is supposed to be a worm segment, I don't mind the odd question about composting, as worms and aerobic composting are different paths to a common goal – the stabilisation of organic materials. Don't worry too much about C:N ratios for composting domestic organic waste. Municipal solid waste (MSW), which is predominantly domestic waste containing garden and kitchen organic matter, has a C:N ratio of 33:1. It follows that the C:N ratio of individual contributors should be at about that same ratio. C:N ratios are important to successful composting and a C:N ratio of around 30:1 is ideal for an aerobic composting system. It is the bigger hundreds-of-tonnes-per-day composters who need to worry about this technicality.

Once you have an established worm farm, do you have to replenish your supply, or do the worms naturally multiply by the required amount themselves?

Rosalie



The worms will increase their numbers quickly. They double in population every six to eight weeks, but that doesn't mean they double in mass. That doesn't happen until they reach maturity about three months later. But by that time there are also a great many juveniles coming on. The result of this is that your worms will actually overpopulate at first, but will ultimately reduce and stabilise according to the amount of food you provide. This can also be influenced by the space. Don't worry, just feed them, but at first make sure you don't overfeed them. Check to see that most of the last feed is substantially gone before the next one goes on. If you are wanting to sell worms, the mere act of removing worms for sale will keep stimulating the remainder to populate with vigour.

I read your letter to GR magazine recently. I organised a bathtub full of worms, according to the info in that article. I didn't use any manure though, and have never put it in. Is this the main problem? I did put in dried grass, seaweed and decomposed compost. I keep it fairly damp, and the worms seem well. It took a little while, but they seem to be thriving now. I add broken-down compost and scraps, all from raw fruit and vegie scraps (no meat, manure, processed or cooked foods etc). Can you see any problems with this setup? I did feel that the worms weren't doing well for a short while, there seemed to be few about. Fine now though. I do dig it over a bit occasionally. Would this aerate the soil enough?

My 16-month-old daughter takes the worm 'juice' and waters the plants with it. The first time she drank it herself with no adverse effects! I hadn't really considered it might not be good for the plants though.

Also, would they mind sawdust? We get quite a bit (redgum mainly). I haven't added any yet though, I don't want to upset the worms when they're going so well! How about well-broken-down manure? Thanks for the advice.

Merridy Koch

Perhaps if you know that the preferred food of compost worms, which is what you have, (tigers or Eisenia fetida*), is bacteria and fungi, you will be able to understand better how to treat your worms. Manure is therefore a good food because it carries a large population of bacteria, and the fresher it is the higher the population. Because manure generally has a high C:N ratio it will support such a high bacterial population that if you add it to your worm bed in deep layers, it will generate heat beyond the worm comfort zone. So six to ten centimetres is about the limit. As the worms ingest the bacteria, so they take in pieces of the food the bacteria are 'eating', and so we see the worms as eating the manure, or the rotting fruit, or whatever.*

If you want to really please your worms, put your kitchen scraps through a blender to reduce the particle size. You can certainly include meat. You can include anything that you can eat comfortably yourself. In other words, if you would find lemons unappetising, so would your worms. The same for orange peel, onions and so on. Sawdust isn't very appetising either, is it? Follow that guideline and you'll be right. Don't feed them compost, they will not find that an appetising meal because it has already been stabilised.

The fact that your little daughter drank some juice suggests she gave a boost to her immune system. If you're using leachate which you catch at the plug hole, stop and think what it is you're catching. It is leachate from rotting vegetation. A sort of liquid manure. The fact that it has worms in it is incidental. If there are pathogens in your rotting vegetation, they will be in the leachate. You make vermicast solution by soaking vermicast in pure water, say a kilo to 10 litres.

In my worm bin I have suddenly found little white worms, which I understand are 'dung worms' What brings them around and do they do any good?

Gabrielle

Almost every worm grower will encounter these little white worms at some time or another. Don't worry about them, they're harmless. They are actually enchytraeids, little white worms, complete with clitellum and most worm characteristics, but certainly not red-blooded. I am told they are quite valuable for tropical fish, but have no actual experience. Acidic conditions are said to foster their appearance, so try adding some garden lime. But, it's amazing where they come from; it's like finding red worms in the spouting of the house. How do they get there? One of the marvels of nature.

David Murphy is an expert on earthworms and aerobic composting, works as a consultant to the organic waste management industry and is the author of several books on earthworms.

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TROPICAL COVER CROPS
Self-Seeding Annuals

by Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance, Babinda, Qld.

Last time, I described some of the pioneering perennial plants I use as cover crops. They are always there, year in, year out, giving me a regular supply of fresh greens. But what about the annuals? They too play an important part in my gardens as useful part-time cover crops.

SUSTAINABLE SELF-SEEDERS

Over the past 11 years, I've encouraged many edible self-seeders to propagate merrily. Once planted, they burst forth with vibrant, nutritious, green growth, then flower, scatter their seeds and die. But the story continues. Next season, when conditions are right, they pop up their heads again, exhibiting even stronger growth.

I've found that not all annuals act like this. In Babinda, fallen lettuce seed readily rots during the wet humid summers. Cucumbers are the same; in fact, a lot of seeds here don't survive. However, several do, including those of mustard (*Brassica hirta*), Japanese parsley (*Cryptotaenia japonica*), salad mallow (*Corchorus olitorius*), chia (*Salvia hispanica*, *S. rhyacophila*), dwarf French marigolds (*Tagetes patula*), Tiny Tom and Broad Ripple Yellow Currant tomatoes (*Lycopersicon pimpinellifolium*). They all lie dormant until conditions are right for them to germinate on the well-drained, mulched slopes and terraces. There's no need for me to plant out new ones. These are the plants I use as cover crops.

Mustard

After pulling up some mustard plants once by accident, I noticed the long tapering root system and realised it was ideal for creating better moisture penetration in the soil.

One June I scattered the minute (one-millimetre diameter) mustard seeds up the sloping banks and selected terraces where they lodged in between the mulch. They mature each October

Mustard's lush large leaves crowd out weeds and are tasty to eat.

and the dainty yellow flowers are pollinated by insects. Some of the numerous, slender, green seed capsules, called siliques (27 millimetres long, 2 millimetres wide), are harvested after they have turned brown and brittle.

I rub the siliques together to release the seeds, then sieve them to separate the empty silique cases. A gentle blow to remove the finer debris leaves perfect mustard seeds in the bowl. Many of the siliques will have opened naturally and the seeds fallen to the ground to await germination next winter. How they survive the summer rains, I'll never know.

To deter caterpillars from eating the leaves and green siliques, I scatter crushed eggshells around the plants. In caterpillar language this translates as 'Caterpillars already here. Keep out!'. It definitely works.

Plants are happy growing close together in full sun with no further watering. Their gigantic leaves successfully shade the soil and are great eating. Use them to wrap up other foods, steam them or, for the adventurous, eat them raw on their own.

Japanese Parsley

Japanese parsley (from the Umbelliferae family) is often called mitsuba (meaning 'three leaves'), honewort or Japanese wild chervil. It is easy to grow, tasty to eat, and, above all, a hardy critter that survives through drought and flood. It sets seed around October and never dies out. You can harvest the entire plant. It is strong in taste so is best steamed or lightly stir-fried; you can even stir-fry the root system. Don't overdo it though, eating excessively large quantities of the leaves can be toxic.

They have successfully self-seeded here into a hardy, dense ground cover, which I treat quite roughly, pulling out large clumps at a time to clear a patch in which to plant other seedlings. Finally, I chop the broad leaves to give me rich green mulch. Their long white roots help create well-aerated, crumbly soil. In 1999, we had seven metres of rain, but there was no soil erosion because of the many hard-working ground covers in place, Japanese parsley being one of them.

Salad Mallow

As the summer rains beat down, thick patches of salad mallow show their heads, rapidly growing to about half a

Salad mallow grows to about half a metre.

metre if not pruned (eaten) and shading the soil with their oval, shiny leaves. The small, edible, yellow flowers mature to slender, cylindrical seed pods. When very young, they can be eaten like tiny okra. Come autumn, plants die down. Once fully mature and dry, the seed pods (three centimetres long, seven millimetres wide) burst open like brown stars, dispersing their small black seeds into the soil where they remain dormant until next summer.

Salad mallow is also called Jews' mallow, vegetable jute, moluka, bush okra and Egyptian spinach. It belongs to the Tiliaceae family and is the Egyptian national plant. A traditional soup, *melokhia*, consists of rice, meat and salad mallow leaves. The plant is high in potassium, with vitamins A and C, calcium, iron and magnesium, and is rich in mucin; all helping with muscle repair, boosting energy levels and detoxifying the body. We regularly eat the young tips and glossy leaves raw, or you can dry them for a healthy sprinkle in soups and other dishes.

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Chia

Chia is another plant with seeds that miraculously survive our humid summers. It belongs to the family Labiatae, along with mint, sage, thyme and rosemary. I initially scattered the seeds up and down the sloping vegie banks last May and June. The display of hardy young seedlings promised a thick cover crop and soil insulator. Plants grew fast and furiously to one metre or more and the square stems branched out with a flush of well-veined, slender leaves. The plants produced a splendid display of misty blue flower spikes that swayed in the breeze.

The dried seed heads resemble wheat. By rubbing them together you release the valuable, energy-rejuvenating seeds. Freshly picked leaves are eaten in salads, or made into a tea. The protein-rich seeds can be added to water for a thirst-quenching drink to aid digestion. Try sprouting them for a nutritious protein snack full of minerals and vitamins A, B and D. Seeds soaked in water will bulk up and are good to sprinkle over your breakfast for an energy-rich day.

Marigold

Dwarf French marigolds (from the Asteraceae family) liven up the beds with their cheerful orange, reddish brown and yellow flowers. I've always wanted to get them self-seeding everywhere, but they struggled over the early years. Now, on my newly mulched, well-drained slopes, they're making up for lost time, finally flourishing and adapting to Babinda conditions. The dried seed heads are easy to harvest. I save some and bury a few here and there to help them spread. Their ability to suppress grasses, fight nematodes and ward off bean beetles and other nasties makes them a useful self-seeder to have around.

Cherry Tomato

My cherry tomatoes are beaut little self-seeders, as are the Broad Ripple Yellow Currant variety, from The Seed Savers' Network in Byron Bay. The latter have adapted surprisingly well to Babinda conditions.

Japanese parsley survives tough conditions.

At the end of May 2002, I planted them everywhere, to grow, fruit and drop their ripened seeds, hoping the seeds would lie dormant until next winter – they did! Up they popped, in the orchard, vegie patches and other strange places.

In October we were still eating tomatoes for breakfast, lunch and tea. Some fruits were left fully ripened on the hardy, sprawling, multi-branched plants to fall, and disperse their seeds once again. In June they will be germinating, greeting the winter sunshine, for yet another bumper crop of tomatoes.

FREE FOOD, FREE MULCH

One of my many aims is to grow enough locally adapted annual seed to use as cover crops. I can scatter them in the vegie and orchard areas to reduce weeds, insulate the soil and provide us with food. Because they are annuals, I can utilise the beds when they die down, with all that rich organic mulch on top. I've experimented with many plants and I'm still learning. I'm sure you all have some great varieties in your backyards that can be used as cover crops too!

References

How Can I Use Herbs In My Daily Life?, Isabell Shipard.

The Seed Savers' Handbook, Michel and Jude Fanton.

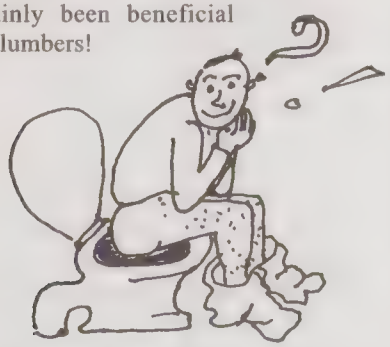
My 'Many Leaves' catalogue of Unusual and Edible Plants is available. Please send 7 x 50 c stamps (includes postage) to: Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance, PO Box 374, Babinda, Qld 4861.

Unclogging A Blocked Sewer

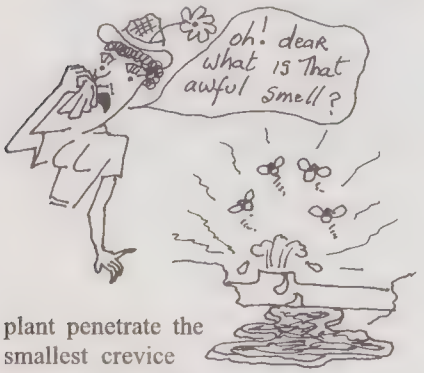
by Kel Connell, Karuah, NSW.

Kel's simple solutions to a smelly situation.

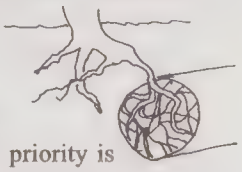
A philosophical plumber in a thoughtful moment once told me that the flushing toilet was probably the best invention since sliced bread. It has certainly been beneficial for plumbers!



Flush toilets and septic tanks, like motor vehicles, are a great convenience when they are working, and a blooming embarrassment when they are not. A blockage in a toilet drain can quickly turn into a smelly problem. Common causes of toilet drain-pipe blockages are sanitary pads, napkins, undissolved toilet paper, children's soft toys and the roots of plants. Once the tiny roots of a

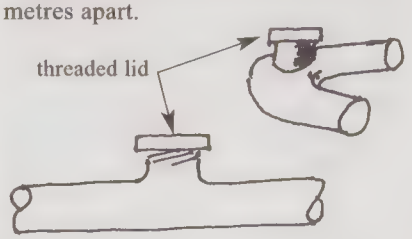


plant penetrate the smallest crevice in a pipe and feed on the nutrients and fluids they quickly develop into a thick mass, resembling a lump of carpet. As the roots expand they form a blockage that is difficult to move. I have heard of septic tanks becoming full of roots and pipe damage so severe that total renewal of all the plumbing was necessary.

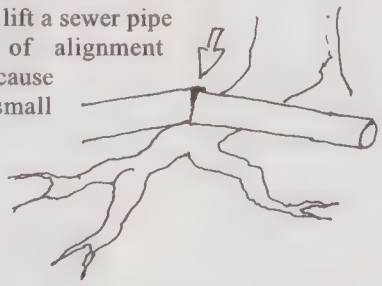


INSPECTION AND ACCESS

The number one priority is to discover where the blockage is. Normally there is an inspection opening at every change of direction, and in straight sections at approximately five metres apart.

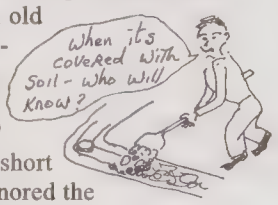


Often a blockage will occur on a bend (well, inside a bend), but not always. Tree roots are not the only culprit either; roots of grasses can also be very invasive. A tree's roots may lift a sewer pipe out of alignment and cause a small

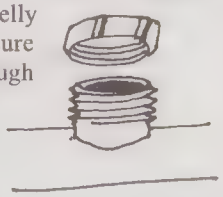


crack to occur, especially on a join. Underground and out of sight roots of grasses will quickly invade.

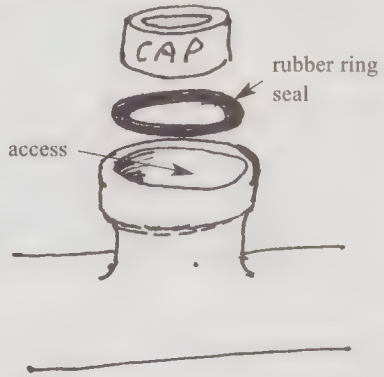
To assist the flow, sewer pipes are usually laid to slope downwards. A plumber at an old house I previously owned struck rock near a 90° elbow. For a short distance he ignored the fall (downward slope). The 90° elbow slowed the flow, and the uphill slope caused recurring problems for me, not with roots – mostly paper, napkins and the like.



Most regional water boards nowadays have specifications governing sewer pipe diameter and wall thickness of pipes, with PVC being the major choice of pipe type. A PVC inspection and access opening is usually a threaded lid cover. Smelly urine under pressure may leak out through the thread and indicate the area of leakage.



Old terracotta pipes had access openings sealed with terracotta caps and rubber rings. The rubber ring seal is compressed when the cap is forced into the access.



Under pressure, as in the case of blockages, the rubber ring would roll up and the cap would pop out, often indicating the area of maximum pressure, usually near the blockage. The PVC threaded, screw-on cap does not pop out but remains fixed. Finding these inspection access openings entails digging, and perhaps a little searching.

The PVC access inspection cap has lugs on the side to assist in unscrewing. If two hands don't work, the lugs

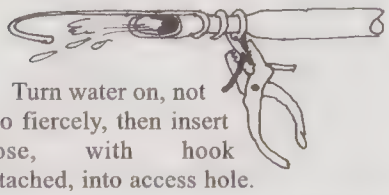
provide a nonslip surface for a wrench.

If waste matter is visible through the inspection hole, it can be assumed the blockage is further downstream. Search further downstream until inspection reveals an empty pipe.

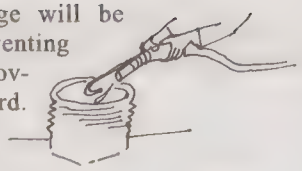
An emptiness in the sewer pipe indicates the blockage could be upstream.

REMOVING BLOCKAGE

A do-it-yourself blockage remover that I have used is made by twisting a piece of coat hanger wire into the shape shown in the sketch, with a hook bend on one end and the other end wrapped around a garden hose, using pliers. To ensure this hook does not slip off the hose, continue screwing onto hose until hose compresses. If this is difficult for you, the hose end can be soaked in hot water to soften it.

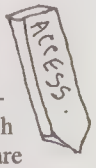


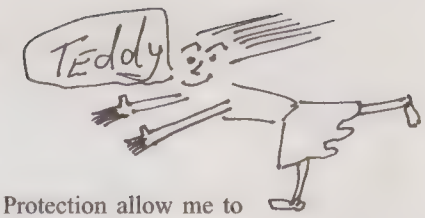
Turn water on, not too fiercely, then insert hose, with hook attached, into access hole.



The blockage will be felt – preventing hose from moving forward. The actual position of the blockage can now be assessed. Contents and identification of blockage material will indicate whether the cause is internal or external.

It would help a great deal for future maintenance work if the location of inspection access holes was obvious. I suggest some form of marking these positions. Some plumbing firms specialise in emergency work such as blockages and insert what are referred to as electric eels into the sewer pipe. Before you phone Animal





Protection allow me to explain – an electric eel consists of a series of cutting blades on the end of a cable. The cutting blades expand until they fit the sewer pipe diameter. The knife-like blades revolve and work forward, cutting the invasive roots. This is much quicker and less messy, also more expensive.

I definitely would not recommend using this type of blockage removal, or any other mechanical device, yourself, as the blades may lock on an obstruction or pipe join and cause an energy reaction known as 'kickback': blades cease to revolve, centrifugal energy is transferred to motor or machine, which revolves – kickback injury could result.

After roots are cut by an electric eel there is no guarantee that they will not grow again. Removal of the plant responsible is recommended.

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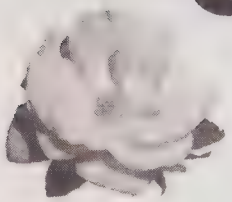
GARDEN BOUNTY

Rose



by Cheryl Beasley, Robina, Qld.

There is a rose to suit every garden and every personality. For use in cosmetics fragrant red roses are the best. Women have used roses to enhance their beauty for thousands of years. All skin types react well with roses.

ROSE-WATERS

¼ cup red rose petals
1 lt water

Pour the water over the rose petals and simmer over a low flame for 30 minutes. Cool and strain. Keep refrigerated.

Alternatively, pack a jar with red rose petals and pour over enough pure alcohol to cover. Leave to steep for two weeks, replacing the petals with fresh ones after one week. Strain and use diluted.

Rose-waters can be used as toners or added to the final facial rinsing water. Add some to the bath water or splash directly on your skin for a subtle fragrance. In the wash rinsing water it will delicately scent clothes.

ROSE CONDITIONING CREAM

2 tbsp lanolin
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp almond oil
1 tbsp rose infusion
2 drops oil of rose

Melt the lanolin in a pan over hot water and add the oils. Beat while adding the warm rose infusion and oil of rose until well mixed. Use as a hand cream or a general body cream.

ROSE COLOGNE

For an easy cologne add one teaspoon oil of rose to one cup of pure alcohol. Shake well to combine. The longer it is left, the better the scent becomes. Dilute with water for a delicate scent or use straight.

ROSE ASTRINGENT

½ tsp glycerine
2 tbsp witch hazel
1 cup rose infusion

Combine all the ingredients and keep in the fridge.

Interested in Poultry?

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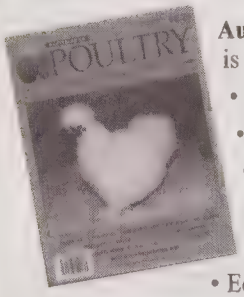

Australasian Poultry magazine is the bird keeper's bible!

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- Backyard and farm flocks
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- Breed profiles
- Breeder contact details
- Edited by Megg Miller
- Covers chooks, ducks, turkeys, geese & guineas

Australasian Poultry comes out every two months. Available at leading newsagents at $5.50 per copy, or subscribe for only $31.50.

Back issues available at $5 per copy including postage & handling. Ask us about binders.

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ROSES PLUS

Natural health begins at home. Pamper yourself or a friend with our refreshing and revitalising Rose-water mist and personal care products. All are handmade from organically grown Damask roses and are chemical free.

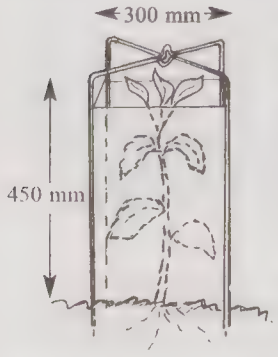
Our other products include face and body moisturisers, muscle relaxing bath soaks, SLS-free hair care and shower gel. You can also cook exotic dishes and cakes with Rose-water and have your home smelling of roses with our house care range.

Contact Sue for a product and price list, which can be posted, faxed or emailed.

Samaria Farm, RMB 1687
Samaria Rd, Benalla 3673.
Ph: 03-5768-2225 Fax: 03-5768-2526
Email: smatheso@benalla.net.au

ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.



LEAN TREE GUARDS

This Australian-made product is a simple and economical way of protecting new plants from weather and munchers. It consists of a plastic sleeve that slips over a self-locking galvanised wire frame. The sleeve is UV stabilised and can be reused for five years. The four millimetre wire frame has a serviceable life of 15 years. The wire can be pushed through up to five layers of newspaper mulch or weedmat.

For enquiries contact David Lean, PO Box 296, Drysdale 3222. Ph: 03-5253-1918, 03-5251-3468.

POTATOPAK

A biodegradable food packaging material made from potato starch sounds like a great concept for fairs, festivals and markets. In fact, it was the litter left after a music festival that motivated the inventors to develop just such a product. A variety of sizes and shapes are available, all made from potato starch (a waste material of potato processing plants). The starch is mixed with cellulose and water and the resulting dough compressed into moulds. The products have better insulating properties than polystyrene and can be frozen and microwaved for reheating solid food. They are not suited for long-term storage of damp foods or for hot liquids, but further developments are in the pipeline. After use they can be disposed of by composting, or be fed to birds, fish or earthworms.

Manufactured by Potatopak (NZ) Ltd, PO Box 746, Blenheim, NZ. Email: sales@potatoplates.com Available in australia from Shop Basics, 301 Canberra Ave, Fyshwick ACT 2609. Ph: 02-6280-4128. Email: sales@shopbasics.com.au

WATER TUBE

This handy device protects new plants and automatically waters them at the same time, ensuring a higher survival rate. Water tubes are easy to install, reusable and supply water for up to 16 days. Made from double-layered recyclable plastic, water is poured between the layers and a coiled dripper inserted to slowly water the plant. The water between the layers also serves to modify the temperature for the plant being protected. Look in hardware stores; there could be different versions of water tubes available.

Available at large hardware stores.

Place Water Tube around the plant and install three stakes.

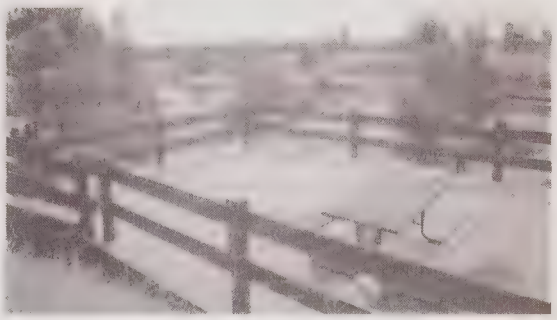
Remove tabs and fill tube with water using both openings.

Insert coil dripper inside about 5 cm from the bottom.

ECO FRIENDLY DECKING

Timber decking is increasingly popular for outdoor living areas or as garden decor, but environmentally conscious home owners will be pleased to learn there is now a product available they can use with a clear conscience. ModWood is made from a composite of sawdust and recycled plastic milk bottles. It requires no sanding, sealing or maintenance; will not crack, splinter, warp or rot and is easy to install. It has high moisture resistance, making it perfect for pool surrounds, and it actually becomes less slippery when wet. At a cost of $50 per square metre the price is comparable with hardwood timber.

For enquiries contact ModWood Technologies P/L, 14 Vimy St, Reservoir 3073. Ph: 03-9462-4333. Website: www.modwood.com.au



X-TREME TAPE

For quick emergency repairs, here's a product that is surely a handyperson's dream. It has no adhesive and bonds only to itself, won't melt up to 260° C, remains flexible to -54° C, forms a permanent air- and water-tight seal, has a tensile strength of 600 psi, insulates to 8000 volts, stretches to three times its length and conforms to irregular shapes. Uses include automotive, electrical, plumbing, gardening and marine repairs. X-treme tape is made of high quality silicone, is available in black and white and measures 25.4 millimetres wide, 0.5 millimetres thick and 3 metres long for a cost of about $10.

Available in hardware stores.

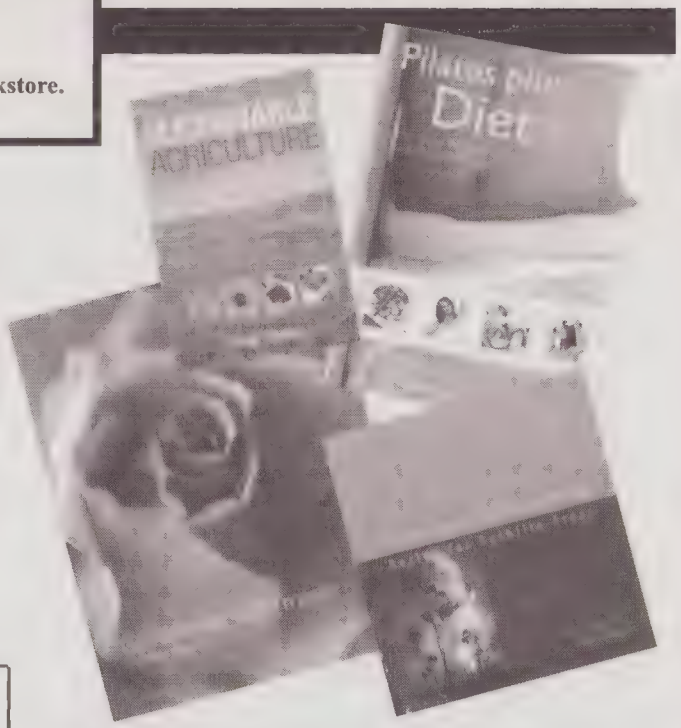
ORGANIC HERBAL PREPARATIONS

Kingfisher Herbs manufactures a range of herbal therapeutic tinctures from hand-picked, organically grown or wild-harvested herbs. Products are of practitioner strength and include echinacea, mental edge (a blend of gingko biloba, gotu kola and hawthorn berry to enhance brain processes), and calm and secure (St John's wort, valerian, gingko biloba and hawthorn berry for treating stress, anxiety and sleeplessness). Herbal extracts retain the maximum strength of the active ingredients.

Available from selected outlets. Contact Kingfisher Herbs, 31 Winnicoopa Rd, Blaxland 2774. Ph: 02-4739-5070. Email: kingfisherherbs@optusnet.com.au

RECENT RELEASES

Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

John Mason

GR readers will be familiar with the reasons sustainable agriculture is a good idea: improving the land increases returns and helps the environment. This is the second edition of Mason's comprehensive guide and in it he discusses all concepts related to sustainable farming: soils; water management; natural pest, disease and weed control; and managing crops, pastures, tree plantings, windbreaks and stock. Much information is summarised into points and charts, making it easy to find and clear to read. The book would be useful for anyone on the land wanting to incorporate sustainable farming methods into their daily life, as well as students, enviro groups and even gardeners.

H/b, 256pp, Landlinks Press, PO Box 1139, Collingwood 3066. Ph: 03-9662-7666. RRP: $45.00.

A YEAR OF SPECIAL HORSES

Robyn Walton

This is a terrific collection of stories that should appeal to anyone interested in horses. Robyn Walter describes her experiences rehabilitating emotionally disturbed horses using natural horsemanship, a method of training and riding that involves no fear, force or pain. The trainer speaks the language of horses, assuming the role of leader of the herd. Walter clearly has a very special bond with horses, and some of the transformations she affects are staggering. The book is loaded with useful hints and advice for dealing with horses, and goes a long way in explaining their behaviour and motivations. The cover and layout of the book may be unassuming, but the stories are charming.

P/b, 100pp, YSH Publications, 'Mulgowrie', Gooloogong 2805. RRP: $22.00 incl p&h.

GARDENING WITH ROSES

The Essential Guide

Who could resist the romance of names like 'Cymbeline' and 'Seduction', or, conversely, 'Whiskey Mac'? This guide to roses focuses on the individual varieties within each species, providing clear and attractive photos and a profile of each. While there is plenty of information on pruning, growing and general rose care, the book would be most useful for finding the best variety and checking its suitability in colour, appearance and habit for your garden. Each species chapter is introduced by an expert and there are some good ideas for companion planting and landscaping. So what was the top rose for fragrance? 'Fragrant Cloud' – naturally.

P/b, 128pp, ABC Books, GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001. Ph: 02-8333-3969. RRP $35.00.

LANDSCAPE AND BUILDING DESIGN FOR BUSHFIRE AREAS

Caird Ramsay & Lisle Rudolph

It's bushfire season again and if you are planning to build or renovate your home, do check out this book first. The authors say better landscaping and building design are two underused weapons against bushfires, and their research has found certain factors that can minimise loss of life and property. The book provides a clear description of what happens in a bushfire and sets out a practical design approach for not only building, but also landscaping both farm and garden. Based on scientific research done after Ash Wednesday and other large-scale bushfires, it clearly shows that individuals can play a role in helping resist fires.

P/b, 104pp, CSIRO Publishing, 150 Oxford St, Collingwood 3066. Ph: 1300-788-000. RRP: $39.95.

PILATES PLUS DIET

The 28-Day Shape-Up Plan With Body Control Pilates
Lynne Robinson & Fiona Hunter

Haven't heard of Pilates? Where have you been? This popular form of exercise is, thankfully, low impact, and is designed to improve movement and posture, strengthen your muscles, make your breathing more efficient and provide you with a lean and supple body. The book helps you achieve this at home on the cheap, combining a clear pictorial guide to the relevant exercises with a 28-day diet and sensible advice to help you lose weight.

P/b, 160pp, Pan Macmillan Australia, Level 18, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney 2000. Ph: 02-9285-9100. RRP: $35.00.

DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Suni Miller.

Marcel and I had this terrific idea: why not have our long-overdue engagement party with our country friends at Avers? I could imagine our farm looking very swish, with a long table set for 20 on the verandah, linen cloth, bunches of wheat and strewn petals. Having it at Avers would be very convenient for my GR colleagues, too. Of course, a few things needed to be done: the bathroom, the painting, the tidying etc. Marcel started to feel dubious. Not me. We could get it done in three weeks, no worries.

The first weekend I decided to get as much of the hard work out of the way as possible. I would paint the rickety old porch, ceiling and walls, all in the one day. Marcel, the sly fox, had gadded off to a wedding (actually, in all fairness, he was the photographer) and I was hoping to finish it before he returned so I could establish a benchmark and show him just what could be done when you really put your back into it.

By morning tea, I had cleaned and sanded the paintwork and was ready for the roller. Took me 30 minutes just to find it (should I perhaps have tidied first?), then I discovered it didn't reach the roof. Still, I could stand on the wobbly paint tin. Trouble was, the pretend wood cladding was not very stiff and kept bending when I tried to roller it. Temperatures climbed. When some brown liquid started dripping into my pure white paint, I got a little disturbed – it was 40° C outside now and drier than old bones – had I inhaled too many paint fumes and started hallucinating? Then I realised, no, it was the actual sweat from my brow dripping into the paint. That was sobering. By the time I got to the walls, I had crossed the pain barrier and was higher than a kite. I was determined to get it done though.

When 8pm rolled round and still no Marcel, I conceded defeat. One wall would have to wait until tomorrow. As Megg likes to say, I had 'broken the back'. Felt like it anyway. After all this hard work I wasn't in any state to contemplate cooking. I rang Marcel and told him to buy something that didn't need to be cooked from the supermarket in the nearest town on the way home. And to hurry up. At last, I sat down and rested my weary body. A few minutes later he returned my call to tell me he must have left his wallet at home because he had turned the car upside down to no avail. They'd kicked him out of the supermarket in disgust and he was on his way home, empty-handed. Did I mind popping a little something on, as the wedding had been quite strenuous and he was peckish?

The wallet wasn't at home and I was getting worried by the time he arrived. I decided it must have fallen out of the car, and he should think about cancelling cards etc. All I knew was, I was hot, tired and grumpy, and I wasn't cooking tea. Preoccupied with his wallet-less state and its ramifications, Marcel was neither sympathetic, nor sufficiently admiring of my painting. I decided I'd go out and check the car just in case. Lo and behold, there it was, under his hat on the passenger seat. 'You didn't look very hard', I told him. 'I knew I'd never leave it on the passenger seat', he said, 'so I didn't bother to look there'. I wasn't very impressed.

With a Herculean effort and a bit of help from Megg, Marcel and I managed to paint another three rooms over the next few days. The trouble was, once I got the walls done I realised how tatty the bare window frames looked. They had to be done as well, I decided. Marcel informed me that I was being ridiculously perfectionist, and if I thought painting with acrylic was nasty, just wait until I tried oil-based paint. He was right. Words appropriate to describe the stuff would burn through this page. My perfectionism took a blow and I decided two coats was enough. As for drips on the floor, I couldn't see them. In fact, anything below knee height could be ignored altogether and I left the skirting boards *au natural*.

Next weekend I was back wrestling with Haymes, Megg was weeding the garden and trimming the hedge, David was mowing chest-high grass, and Marcel finally bit the bullet and cut out the Lami-board (just like real tiles, only not) to cover the gaping hole above the bath and enable us all to have a shower. We certainly needed one by this stage, and it was only getting hotter. Things were going well, when I heard such pithy swearing that I nearly dropped my brush in the 10-

Suni, Noreen, Sabrina and other GR colleagues and friends at Avers for lunch.

litre paint tin in fright. The cat sensibly ran under the house. I contemplated hiding too, but curiosity won. Dear me, he had cut the second piece upside-down and the tile lines did not match up. This was the piece with the tap holes in it, so it could not be turned around. I told him that at least I was painting properly and could he try a little harder as all the office ladies had very handy husbands who would laugh at us when they saw it. This was my reputation on the line. When I went in after the third piece had been adhered, I nearly cried. This piece too did not meet up! What on earth? Had he lost his mind? No, he informed me proudly, he had done it on purpose as he had decided to make it his signature. Did I not think it was artistic? I did not. But it was up now, fixed firm, and I wanted that shower. Signature indeed!

The weekend of the party arrived. There was so much left to do that I wrote a half-hourly schedule with all our jobs on it. Trouble was, no one except me followed it. Twenty people were arriving in their glad rags expecting lunch the next day, so we had to get it done somehow. I washed, cleaned, painted and vacuumed, and that was just before lunch. The cat had never seen such industry. Why didn't I have a rest, as I was getting a bit snappy, Marcel suggested. No, that wasn't on the schedule. Then, running around in my flip-flops, I tripped over the axe. It didn't look like much blood, until I lifted my cut foot out of the sandal and saw the red sea swelling beneath it. 'Argh! Marcel!' 'What?' 'Help, I've tripped over the axe!' 'What? Can't hear you.' 'The axe! I'm dying!' He heard that time, and came running, expecting half a foot missing. 'I didn't see that on the schedule', he said, and added that he was too busy to sympathise for long. He had things to do. I should just sit for a while and have some quiet time. Luckily, Megg arrived to give motherly sympathy, love and a Dettol bath, and to express horror at the amount of blood coming from such a minuscule cut. I judged the housework done and returned to making the salads and roast vegies. Less than an hour later I was back in the Dettol bath, this time with a sliced finger. I was taking blood, sweat and tears to a whole new level.

Party day dawned bright and sunny, and I got up early as per the schedule, now adjusted to quarter-hour activities. Marcel was pleased I had even pencilled in 15 minutes of primping for us both before everyone arrived. We set up the tables, strewed the petals, arranged the wheat in vases, hung the Japanese lanterns and laid out the lovely pink runner and matching pink plastic plates. Marcel reminded me how understanding he was because not every bloke would let a girl have a pink party. Too true, I agreed. I went in to whip the cream for the iced sponges (pink), and discovered that although I'd packed the electric beater in its box, the actual beater tines were missing. A disaster! My primping time was wasted on quality hysteria. Luckily, David agreed to hand-whip the cream, and I contented myself with arranging the grog in the wheelbarrow full of ice. It looked damn good too!

The first people rolled up, the corks popped, the barbie sprang into life, I looked around and, believe it or not, everything was perfect! Marcel stopped turning snags long enough to give me a grin and say the place had never looked better! In three weeks we'd done more than in three years. And it had been such a mad panic the nasty parts were already a blur. One glass of champers and I immediately forgot I had been sliced up and overheated, and even stopped smelling paint. We had an absolutely wonderful time, eating and drinking for hours in the late afternoon sunshine and even the cat came out to socialise. It was one of the best days in my life.

'Well done', Megg said as she left. 'Just don't get carried away and start thinking about having a DIY wedding here.'

No, once was enough!

PENPALS

Hi. My name is Charna and I'm looking for a penpal who likes painting, drawing, dancing and art. I am 9 years old and want a penpal of similar age. I live on a farm and like going to the beach.

Charna (GR 161),
PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

I live in the country and would like some penpals. I'm interested in global and national issues, including the environment. I have chemical sensitivities.

Margot,
C/- 3 Topaz Crt, MILDURA 3500.

I'd like to make friends in the Albany, WA, area. I'm 22, married with four children. I enjoy gardening, cooking and healthy living.

Samantha Barker,
PO Box 539, ALBANY 6331.

Hi. My name is Luke, I am 10 years old. My hobbies are cricket, computers and playing on my Game Boy. I am doing home schooling and love it, and would like a boy penpal.

Luke (GR 161),
PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

Hi. My name is Ricky, I am 8 years old. I like playing on my Game Boy and love to run and play cricket. I am home schooling now and would like a boy penpal.

Ricky (GR 161),
PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

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PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

VILLAGE LIFE, 904 m² gently sloping clear block. Walk to school, hospital, pub & shops. Brisbane 2.5 hrs, Surfers 2.5 hrs, Byron 2.5 hrs. All utilities avail. Glorious views, handy to world heritage nat pks. 10K ONO. Ph: 0421-061-892.

GLENORIE, SYDNEY: Vacant acres only 45 mins to the city. This gently sloping environmentally sensitive 10.4 bush ac has approved building/garden area of over 1 ac. The residual land is to remain in its natural state & can be enjoyed for its flora & fauna & lovely views to the Blue Mountains. Positioned well in the Hills district of Sydney it is just 5 mins to amenities & 500 m to the school bus route. A rare block! $645,000. Ph: Yvonne, agent, 0413-482-791.

TUMBARUMBA, NSW, Snowy Mountain foothills: 5 b/r mudbrick house on 1¾ ac. Open plan living area, sun room, en suite, walk-in pantry, wood heating, mountain views. Established gardens, hothouse, orchard, berries & many extras. Fifteen mins walk to main st. $290,000. Ph: 02-6948-3239.

GARDEN OF EDEN (freehold) for $800,000. A magnif 900 sq m homestead (7 b/rs, 3 bathrooms, with accom for 12 people + saltwater pool) set in 1750 ac (708.22 ha) property of secluded, virgin native forest endowed with original flora & fauna. This is a once-in-a-lifetime development opportunity ideal for permaculture community, health retreat B & B, wilderness camping & more. This secluded estate on the edge of Pilliga State Forest near Wee Waa has perennial crk & unlimited drinking water bore, estab poultry run, rabbit hutches, f/trees & screened garden of sandy loam. Ph: 02-6796-2204. Pictures & details on application to: mandelsloh@hotmail.com

UPPER LANDSDOWNE, comfy 3 b/r house + separate guest room on Landsdowne River, 20 – 30 mins Taree & Wingham, 5 mins local primary or bus to high schools & Steiner (see last GR). Beautiful country, good soil, private. $315,000 sale; swap for something Mullumbimby area, or rent to organic grassrooters. Ph: 02-6556-9200.

QUEENSLAND

NOOSA HINTERLAND: Over 80 fertile ac, Land for Wildlife, lge 4 b/r, 2 bath brick home. Four-star B & B units, views, r/forest, pool, dam, crk, fenced, 9 paddocks, lge sheds. $700,000. Ph: 0427-367-299, 07-5485-0890.
Email: alpacas@banyandah.com

OPAL FIELD, YOWAH: Small cottage, big block, bitumen rd, one-teacher school, lovely community, elec, hot artesian water connected. Heaps of opal to be found on field. Children run free, stress-free life! WIWO. Absolutely everything in cottage. $35,000 ONO. Ph: Katrina, 08-8988-4628.

ROCKHAMPTON, fully fenced 106 ac fertile soil, 40 mins from Rockhampton, 1 hr from Yeppoon beaches. Organic certification in process. Plenty of good quality bore water. Large fenced dam with good catchment area. Near-new air-conditioned 2 b/r house in open plan with front verandah. Water tanks & garden shed. School bus & buses going to town. $147,000. Ph: 07-4937-3080.

BUNDABERG AREA: 1 ac blocks set in 360 ac of parkland, underground power, tar-sealed rd, supplementary water, safe, quiet place to live. $40,000. Ph: agent, 07-4153-1303, or website: www.nbre.com.au

NANANGO, QLD, 8+ ac (with crk), unimproved. Water & elec avail. $36,000. Ph: 02-4990-9635.

VICTORIA

ST ARNAUD, house & land for sale, approx 6 km from PO, comprising 4 b/rs all with BIRs, full en suite + WIR to master b/r, study & billiards room, lge kitchen-dining area, Coonara heater in lounge room, 20 sq of living space. House is set on 20 ac with panoramic views, verandahs front & rear. Rainwater supply to house is 70,000 lt, has an excel solar system & wind generator. Olive trees & lavender have been planted. This property offers a comfortable lifestyle with a possible small business enterprise. $167,000 ONO. Ph: Lynda or Colin, 03-5495-2556.

GRASSIFIEDS

DEADLINES: GR 162 – 27 FEBRUARY
GR 163 – 30 APRIL

PROPERTY FOR SALE

VICTORIA

WONTHAGGI, TWO HOURS FROM MELBOURNE, 8 sq 1 b/r home with second separate b/r, lge flat block 50' x 250', 8 sq roofed deck area, 4 sq garage/workshop. Nectre wood stove/heater heats hot water with solar back-up, wired for solar power, 240V power, mature f/trees – apricot, almond, peach, grape, plum, pear, loquat – herb garden. Nearby Bunnarong Alternative School, pony club, bushwalking tracks, walking distance from junior secondary college, golf club, TAFE; 2 mins by car to Wonthaggi business district, 10 mins to beaches Cape Paterson, Inverloch, 25 mins to Phillip Island. Ideal holiday destination, first home owner or retiree, suit anyone interested in alternative lifestyle, room for further development. $155,000. Open for inspection Sundays 12 – 3pm. Ph: Mary, 0402-617-320, Sonia, 0417-104-699.

YARRA VALLEY, 4 b/r log cabin on approx 9 ac of beautiful bush. Magnificent views, very private & only 5 mins from Yarra Junction. Close to Steiner & other schools. Excellent opportunity for private holiday home. $289,950. Ph: Barry Plant, Doherty RE, 03-5964-7344.

SECLUDED COTTAGE, HARROW, 1 hr to Hamilton or Horsham. Beautiful yurt-style, cedar/limestone dwelling on 3 ac, magnif views. Permaculture garden, 30 fruit & nut trees. Town/rainwater, solar power, SCS hot water. Five mins walk to historic village & clear river. $95,000. Ph: 03-5574-2273, or 03-5149-7240.

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ECOLOGICAL HARMONY: If Mother Nature designed a home to live in harmony with the environment – this would be it. A blend of ecologically friendly materials & craftsmanship combine to make this semi-underground home one of Circular Head's unique properties. Island & water views add to the appeal. The 2.57 ha has scope for the garden lover & tree farmer with f/trees, 500 radiata pines & 200 Arizona cypress. $150,000. Ph: 03-6452-1111 for details.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MARGARET RIVER, WA: Boranup community is 240 ac, mostly forest, 22 home sites. Established 20 years. Home is lge, character, 4 b/r, passive solar. Gardens, f/trees etc. $250,000. Ph: 08-9757-9773.

RAVENSTHORPE: 3 b/r house, creative workmanship in beautiful timber panelling & built-in furniture. Spectacular views, near southern coast. Work shed, solar HWS, lge garden, 14 f/trees, vegie garden on ½ ac. Air conditioning. $138,000. Ph: 08-9838-1157.

FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

MIDDLE OF DAPTO, 1 b/r self-cont flat, growing fresh permaculture food. $90 week, 4 weeks bond. Share with family of bluetongue lizards in garden. Ph: 02-4261-9942, 0438-290-503, nature@1earth.net

ONE-BEDROOM FLAT, part rent, part gardening & odd jobs, negotiable. Forty km nth Geraldton, WA, good water, grow your own vegies. Suit retired fit & active person(s). Write: Box 76, NORTHAMPTON 6535, or ph: 08-9934-1984.

BLOOMSBURY: Refurbished 2 b/r+ cottage, 909 m². Homegrown produce potential. Walk 'servo', PO. $105 weekly. Ph: 07-5572-2881, mmecholet@hotmail.com

CARETAKER COUPLE REQUIRED: Free accom in s/c flat in return for 2 days light relief work, private park. Suit pensioner couple. Colo River Holiday Park, Putty Rd, COLO 2756. Ph: 02-4575-4068.

COMMUNITIES/SHARES

MATURE LADY LOOKING FOR COMMUNITY in Queensland. Have dog, Kelpie. Please send info to: 2/46 Coates Rd, LAKES ENTRANCE, Victoria 3909. Ph: 03-5155-4567.

LOW COST RURAL LAND SHARING COMMUNITY (NANDIRI), between Port Macquarie & Crescent Head, next to Limeburners wilderness area. Five km to deserted beaches, 20 km to port. 1.2 ac on 560 ac. Committed to environmental sensitivity, sustainable land use practices, wildlife protection. Big hill, good views, quarry for rd making, good soil. Initially a primitive camping permit will allow us to work and play. Deadline for settlement possibly 3 years. No cats, dogs, cloven-foot animals. Thirty shares at $20,000. Ph: Greg, 02-6653-4601, Tony, 02-6566-0890. Email: jaahn@optusnet.com.au

SHARE ACCOMMODATION

WORKING GR WOMAN requires share accom near rail, with other environmental people, in Sydney area. Ph: 0438-290-503, or email: nature@1earth.net

FOR SALE

BEESWAX CANDLES, half wholesale price, sell easily at markets. Ph: 02-6262-6329.

'GRASS ROOTS': 1, 2, 6 – 113, 115 – 138. Also 34 assorted *Earth Garden*. Will not separate. $300 + postage. Ph: Jenny Ross, 03-5779-1720.

OPPORTUNITIES

WANTED: RESPECTABLE PERSON for sml farm, Cobargo, south coast NSW, must have gas c/van. Free rent for light work on property – must be able to keep self & have own income, sober habits, no ties & no dogs. Ph: 02-6493-7204 after 9pm.

PIONEERS WANTED, with raw courage, determination, own transport & accom. No pets, n/s, n/d. Learn to run your own farm before you buy. Organic lifestyle on 100+ ac, coastal Qld, 3 mths minimum, sml rental. Ph: 0438-720-156, SMS.

LAND WANTED

SMALL ACREAGE NORTHERN NSW, cash deposit $15,000, rest negotiable. Must have rd access, water. Ph: Mandy/Adrian, 0422-701-749.

WANTED TO RENT/ CARETAKE

AUSSIE LADY, 65, seeks livable, quiet NSW accom. Pension only income, eligible rent assistance. Cabin, c/van site, water. Have 2 contained cats, very old dog, animal & bush lover, n/s, n/d, religious, vegetarian. Contact: Mrs Rose, 29 Neville Cl, BATEAU BAY 2261.

PROFESSIONAL COUPLE qualified in organic agriculture & conservation, looking to rent/buy sml house in Adelaide Hills. If renting, willing to tend gardens/animals. Ph: 08-8363-4098, 08-8336-0931.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

KIMBERLEYS, WA, leasehold for sale: fish & chip shop set in garden courtyard, dine-in/take-away. Local fish, drawcard – wild barramundi. Long lease, incl shop/house, WIWO, suit couple, excel turnover. POA. Ph: 0417-917-597.

PUBLICATIONS

'AUSTRALIA'S 12 SACRED PLACES'. A book by Alan Whitehead. www.sacredplaces.com.au Ph: 02-4787-5335, or ask at your local library.

LOW POLLUTION TRAVEL GUIDE: ideas for those sometimes affected by asthma, fatigue, chemical sensitivities, allergies, fibromyalgia, 65pp, recycled paper, soy ink. $7.50 (stamps or cheque) to: D South, C/- 5 James St, RYE 3941.

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ALTERNATIVE RECIPE NEWSLETTER. A newsletter full of creative delicious recipes for special dietary needs incl dairy-free, gluten-free, vegan etc. For a FREE trial copy send SAE to: Trial Recipes, 18 Parkes Cres, BLACKETT 2770.

STEINER EDUCATION & HOMESCHOOLING BOOKS. Alan Whitehead, PO Box 329, BLACKHEATH 2785. Ph: 02-4787-5335. Website: www.users.bigpond.com/goldenbeetlebooks/

SUPPRESSED & UNUSUAL TECHNOLOGIES CATALOGUE: Free energy devices, antigravity, hydrogen fuel, magnetic motors, alternate fuels & engines, high mileage, 200+ topics. Send 5 x Aust 50c stamps to: Lostech Archive, PO Box 456-R, TOLGA, Qld 4882, Australia.

'THE MIRACLE OF MULCH' by Mary Horsfall: Everything you need to know about mulch to save water, save money, improve soil & have a healthy, lush, productive garden. Great gift for the gardeners in your life. $20 for signed copy from author, incl postage, $35 for two. Ph: 0417-569-411, or write to: Notable Products, PO Box 101, EUROA 3666.

'STEPPING STONES FOR HOME EDUCATORS' is an excellent 40-page quarterly designed to inform & inspire homeschoolers across Australia. Published since 1995. $8 single, $30 for 4 to: Grace Chapman, MS 1877, MALANDA, Qld 4885.

'NIMBIN NEWS MAGAZINE', is a cooperatively run access magazine with articles & information from Nimbin and other areas. We cover concerns relevant to alternative lifestylers & others looking for the most sustainable way. We are one of the longest running alternative magazines & the Nimbin bioregion is at the forefront in the development of sustainable systems. As networkers we scan many mags for suitable & scarce information for our readers. Subscription: 6 issues for $20, sample $3.50. Back copies 5 for $12 posted. PO Box 209, NIMBIN 2480. *Beyond the Rainbow* – literacy mag. Sub: $18 per year for 6 editions. Email: nimbinnews@nrg.com.au

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'NATIVE STINGLESS BEES' for profit or pleasure – how to get started, pollination/honey potential in Qld. Detailed info booklets, packed with photographs, diagrams. For free catalogue, send name, address & 50 c stamp to: ANBRC, Box 74-G4, NORTH RICHMOND, NSW 2754.

PLACING AN AD?
See page 76 for details

HOME EDUCATION, for info send SAE to: Alternative Education Resource Group, PO Box 461, DAYLESFORD 3460.

'NEW VEGETARIAN & NATURAL HEALTH', the magazine of the Natural Health & Vegetarian societies. Subscribe today, $30 yearly, and receive: 4 vital magazines, discounts at participating health food stores and natural therapies practitioners listed in magazine. Head Office, 28/541 High St, PENRITH, NSW 2750. Ph: 02-4721-5068.

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STONEGROUND FLOUR in-home, with a SCHNITZER German quality hand or electric stone mill, 6 models from $178. SCHNITZER MILLS, 420 Freemantle Rd, BATHURST 2795. Ph: 02-6336-9100, www.schnitzer.com.au

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FREE CLASSIFIEDS FOR HORSES, LIVESTOCK AND PETS, also crafts, gifts & more for sale. Wholesale & retail. Website: www.farmcraftandcountry.com.au

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KOMBUCHA FUNGUS mother plant, pay cash. Lot 4 Range Rd, SARINA 4737. Ph: 07-4956-2431.

OLD-STYLE WOOD CHIP HEATER for water. Must be working & not burnt out. Ph: 08-8644-0480. Email: eilbp@optusnet.com.au

TRACTOR TYRE/TYRES, rear, 13-50 x 28. Ph: 03-5797-6395. Email: suevor@bigpond.com

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Email: jbarton@pipeline.com.au

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INTRODUCTION TO PERMACULTURE COURSES: Bega Valley, south NSW, 24 & 25 April, & 6 & 7 November. Sample a taste of the new art to living. The 10-year development of Brogo Permaculture Gardens provides the living classroom highlighting many aspects of sustainable land use & living. John Champagne & guests will impart knowledge & inspiration. Includes hands-on practical workshops & site tours. Limited to 22 participants (early bookings 2 months prior will receive 10% discount). Cost $150. Low cost accom avail. Ph: 02-6492-7306, or email: champagne@acr.net.au

PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE Accredited Course, Cooroy Qld, 29/3/04 to 8/4/04. For details: www.permaculture.org.au

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DEADLINES: GR 162 – 27 FEBRUARY
GR 163 – 30 APRIL

WATER SELF-SUFFICIENCY COURSE: With water engineer Scott McFarlane. Topics: r/water tanks, water conservation, on-site sewage disposal, greywater reuse, compost toilets. At CERES, 8 Lee St, Brunswick East, 10am – 5pm, 1st Sunday of the month. Ph: 03-5175-0895. Email: mcfarlanes@netspace.net.au

CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAMS: Aromatherapy Dip, Vitamin & Nutrition Therapy Dip, Animal Therapies (The Green Vet), Herbal Therapies, Folk Medicine, Psychic Healing, Celtic Wicca, Psychic Development. Free brochure from: Wiccan Home Studies (estab 25 yrs), The Friendly School, PO Box 138, SURRY HILLS 2010. Ph: 02-9319-6166.
Email: owlhome@ozemail.com.au

PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSES with Rick & Naomi Coleman, Southern Cross Permaculture Institute. Next course March 2004 & December 2004. Call Naomi: 03-5664-3301 for info or email: scpi@tpg.com.au Website: www.southerncrosspermaculture.com.au

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NATIONAL ALLERGY ASSOCIATION of Australia (NAAA) and ECO-CHOICE (our mail-order store). Enquiries; information; clinics; membership & catalogue. Contact NAAA, PO Box 48, HARRIS PARK, NSW 2150. Ph: 0415-928-028. Email: naaaauz@yahoo.com

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STRANDED COTTON BUNDLES, 100 x 8 m skeins, 50 colours – $28 post free. Big bundles stranded cotton, 230 colours – $58 post free. Send 50 c stamp for list. ARTY & CRAFTY, PO Box 40, DAW PARK, SA 5041. Ph: 08-8277-3763, fax: 08-8277-9402.

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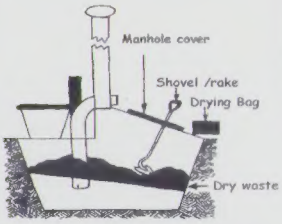

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